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BOSTON UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL

Thesis

THE USE OF APHORISMS IN MEREDITH'S NOVELS

by

Ruth Clark Cox
(A.B., Trinity College, 1933)

submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

1934

POSTER UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL

Thesis

THE USE OF ALGEBRA IN THE THEORY OF

W

John G. Thompson
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- A. Effect of aphorisms on Meredith's literary style

THE USE OF APHORISMS IN MEREDITH'S NOVELS
INTRODUCTION:

In a famous lecture delivered before the Edinburgh Philosophical Institution in 1887, the noted critic, Lord John Morley, lamented that he could place no English name in the class with LaRocheffoucauld, Pascal, and La Bruyère, and that furthermore, as he said: "Our own generation has been singularly unfortunate in the literature of aphorism!"¹

It is true that in general the literature of the early nineteenth century was barren in aphoristic expression, at least when it is compared with the literature of earlier centuries. To be sure, occasional bits of gnomic phrase had appeared in the prose of Hazlitt, Emerson and Coleridge, as well as in the poetry of Keats and Shelley; and the aphorisms of Mrs. Poyser - the only female aphorist in our literature, had been created. With these exceptions, however, we can point to no writer who gave any noteworthy amount of aphorisms in his work, until the middle of the century when there loomed upon the horizon a novelist who was destined to be one of the most profound and yet one of the least known aphorists of English literature.

It is to this novelist, George Meredith, that Lord Morley referred later in the lecture before mentioned, when he found consolation in the fact that "one living writer of genius has given us a little sheaf of subtly-

¹ Morley, Lord John: Aphorisms: p.19

THE USE OF APOPHORISMS IN MARSHALL'S NOVELS INTRODUCTION

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pointed maxims in The Ordeal of Richard Feverel; and he added the hope that perhaps Meredith would "one day divulge to the world the whole contents of Sir Austin Feverel's unpublished volume 'The Pilgrim's Scrip'."1

AIM OF THESIS:

Lord Morley's wish was not fulfilled, unfortunately; but it is our endeavor here to view those aphorisms which Meredith gave us in his novels, to see what use he made of them there, and to discover what effect their use had upon his literary style.

CHARACTERISTICS OF AN APHORISM:

Before we can deal with Meredith's aphorisms specifically, however, it will be necessary to understand what we mean generally by an aphorism, and to describe the characteristics by which we shall recognize one when we meet it. In the terms of the Oxford Dictionary, the word aphorism comes from the Greek word aphorismos, which was first applied to the medical aphorisms of Hippocrates, the father of medicine, and later was "transferred to other sententious statements of principles generally". Thus, aphorism comes to mean "any principle or precept expressed in a few words; a short, pithy sentence containing a truth of general import, a maxim". The aphorism is beyond the pale of scientific explanation and is concerned with life and human nature. In this manner, it differs from the axiom which states something already

1 Morley:op.cit. p. 19

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evident, and from the theorem which challenges demonstration.

Although the epigram is a term technically applied to verse, the prose epigram is common, and, like the aphorism, carries with it the connotation of a brief statement about life, although this statement is not always or necessarily of universal importance. A maxim, strictly speaking, adds a form of advice and admonition to the expression of a general truth. An apophthegm is a spoken aphorism.

Thus, in their definitions, Crabbe and other philologists and rhetoricians give in considerable detail the shades of meaning between these words; but such distinctions have been little observed in current speech and little more in critical works on literary style. For the reason that in such critical comments as those from which we shall later have occasion to quote these words are used interchangeably, and because we wish to study the general effect of these phrases upon Meredith's style, we shall make no sharp distinctions between these terms. When we have observed the differences pointed out by grammarians and when we have considered some of the precious stones in Meredith's novels, we will agree with Lord Morley that "the distinction is one without much difference". "Aphorism or maxim," he says, "let us remember that this

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"Aphorism or maxim," he says, "let us remember that this

wisdom of life is the true salt of literature; that those books, at least in prose, are most nourishing which are most richly stored with it; and that it is one of the great objects, apart from the mere acquisition of knowledge which men ought to seek in the reading of books."¹ Certain characteristics will be necessary to all our aphoristic selections, however, and these will be seen to be chiefly: brevity of expression, universality and profundity of thought, and originality of diction.

CHARACTERISTICS OF AN APHORIST:

A necessary factor in the composition of an aphorism is the equipment, experience, and background of the aphorist. It is folly to expect aphorisms to blossom forth from barren soil, or to be plucked as flowers from the imagination. Rather, they grow only when nourished by experience, careful thought, and keen observation, so that their composer views the heart, the character, and the weaknesses of mankind in a perspective that is healthy and never distorted.

Meredith himself, in the first chapter of The Ordeal of Richard Feverel, when speaking of Sir Austin, said:

"Modern aphorists are accustomed to make their phrases a play of wit, flashing antithetical brilliances rather than condensing profound truths. This one, if he did not always say things new, evidently spoke from reflection,

1. Morley, Lord John, Ibid p 17

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feeling, and experience: the triad which gives a healthy utterance to wisdom: and omitting one of which or with the three not in proper equipoise and junction, admirable sentences may survive as curiosities, and aptly quoted may clinch a debate, but are as Dead Sea Apples to a thirsting mind, and to men at large incomprehensible juggleries usurping dominion of their understandings without seal of authority." 1

MEREDITH'S BACKGROUND:

It will be obvious from a view of the life of Meredith, that thought, observation, and experience were part of his heritage. From his ancestors, who were working people, he acquired a sympathetic insight into the lives of the humble and the lowly whom he came to understand and to portray so well. During his formative years - fourteen to sixteen- 2 he was educated in Germany, where the philosophy and thought of the country were important influences in developing his sense of an analytical observation of life. Here in one of the famous Moravian schools, Meredith stored up a wealth of knowledge in the Christian ideals and a keen sense of the principles of liberalism which were to abound in his works. When still a young man, he tasted the bitterness of defeat, - first in unsuccessful literary endeavor, then in financial hardships, and finally, in an unhappy marriage with the daughter of Thomas Love Peacock. From his father-in-law

1 The Ordeal p 1.

2. Sencourt, R.E. The Life of George Meredith, p.17
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Meredith seems to have acquired some of his love for that satiric and intellectual wit which Peacock used with great effectiveness in his own work. It has even been pointed out that his attraction to Peacock's work may have brought about, in part at least, Meredith's marriage, a marriage which resulted in so much tragedy. Mrs. Meredith died in 1861 after twelve years of incompatibility with her husband, and about this time, Meredith began the busiest period of his life. Indefatigable energy and an abundance of experience in literary endeavor now began to furnish him with a store of knowledge from which he could later draw. At this time he held various journalistic positions, contributing articles of both social and literary scope. Valuable friendships were now formed with notable persons such as Frederic, Sandys, the artist, Swinburne, and Rossetti. During intermissions in his journalistic work, Meredith travelled widely on the Continent,- in France, Germany, Switzerland, and Italy.

Happiness came to the novelist in his second marriage which was the inspiration for a veritable fountain of successful literary production. Already the author of eight novels, he settled now at his unpretentious cottage at Box Hill, Surrey, where he spent many happy days and where he stored up more wisdom and experience as a background for the books he was to produce

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Clouds again hovered about Box Hill, however, when in 1885 the wife with whom he had known so much peace and happiness, was taken from him. He became somewhat of a recluse from society for some years and although he later welcomed congenial friends to the door of Flint Cottage, the evening of his life was spent in comparative quiet. The year 1909 closes the chapters of a life, not of action but of peaceful meditation and thought, chastened by mental sufferings and periods of unhappiness. A keen knowledge and analysis of his own heart, of the hearts of others, of the characters and manners, foibles and weaknesses of human nature,- in short, a profound love of mankind,- all serve to make Meredith's life peculiarly fitting as the life of a maker of aphorisms. In addition to his wealth of experience, Meredith had a mentality which naturally and easily created aphorisms. He was not only a lover of mankind and a philosopher, but a profoundly brilliant thinker, and the possessor of a fine

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To embody the results of his observations in phrases which would survive even his long life, was the aim of Meredith, as it is the aim of all who attempt to "cultivate this delicate art".

--- --- ---
PARTICULAR CRITICISM OF MEREDITH'S APHORISMS:

The subjects with which Meredith's aphorisms deal are almost as varied as his literary abilities. From maxims concerning human creatures and their relations to one another, he proceeds to a discussion of man's relation to his God, scattering along the way truisms about the art of living. An attempt to catalogue these numerous and heterogeneous aphorisms is a difficult one. In general, we find that they concern themselves with men and women, with the relations and comparisons between the two; with love, marriage, and friendship, and finally with the relation between man and his God. Interspersed freely among these classifications and outnumbering them, are gems of wisdom worthy of carrying with one on a journey through life.

APHORISMS ON WOMEN:

None of Meredith's aphorisms are more compact with thought or more charmingly expressed than those pertaining to women, for whom Meredith has conceived

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None of Meredith's aphorisms are more compact with thought or more charmingly expressed than those pertaining to women, for whom Meredith has conceived

a broader world. It is in woman's service that Meredith's style attains its greatest height. One is not surprised to find the author a determined opponent of sentimentalism in women as well as in men. For him a true woman will be free from the clothing of sentimentalism and a daughter of the earth, unadorned in her simplicity and naturalness.

WOMEN AND SENTIMENTALITY:

Sandra Belloni comes to us as a relief set against the fine shades of the three Pole sisters, "Pole, Polony and Maypole" as they have been aptly called; and that relief which she offers is attributable to her utter simplicity and her close proximity to nature. Sandra would undoubtedly represent a specific example of Meredith's "true woman" just as one of the aphorisms summarizes his attitude toward her, in Diana of the Crossways: "True poets and true women have the native sense of the divineness of what the world deems gross material substance". Here he has epitomized in a compact form the attitude he has taken toward women in his novels and in his daily life. A true woman, as a true poet, will be - to use one of Meredith's own phrases - founded in "good gross earth", and free from the artificiality of the "women of waxwork". He has taken pains to paint just such a character in his conception of Lucy in The Ordeal, in Rhoda, and, as we have

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suggested, in Sandra of Sandra Belloni and Vittoria. The very fact that the charming Emilia Belloni is so predominately a child of nature, sets her in contrast to those with whom she is associated, and causes Meredith to generalize once more:

"Sentimentalists are a perfectly natural growth of a fat soil. Wealthy communities must engender them. If with attentive minds we mark the origin of classes, we shall discern that the nice feelings and the fine shades play a principal part in our human development and social history. I dare not say that civilized man is to be studied with the eye of the naturalist; but my vulgar meaning might almost be twisted to convey that our sentimentalists are a variety owing their existence to a certain prolonged term of comfortable feeling. The pig, it will be retorted, passes likewise through this training. He does. But in him it is not combined with an indigestion of High-German romances. Here is so notable a difference that he cannot possibly be said to be of the family. And I maintain it against him who have nevertheless listened attentively to the eulogies pronounced by the vendors of prize bacon." 1

We shall see that sentimentalism in men is regarded with less disdain than that found in women, since the latter should by instinct be closer to nature; but whether in men or women, Meredith insists that

"Sentimentalists are they who seek to enjoy Reality without incurring the immense debtorship for a thing done." 2

Later in the same book we hear him make the generalization that:

"there is no more grievous sight, as there is no greater perversion, than a wise man at the mercy of his feelings." 3

1. Sandra Belloni p 5

2. The Ordeal p. 266

3. The Ordeal p 572

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His portrait of the three sentimental Poles indicates, possibly better than any other of his character drawings, how profoundly he understands and how accurately he can picture that sentimentalism which he regards as the underlying cause of an enveloping egoism. He observes:

"Just as children will pinch themselves, pleased, up to the verge of unendurable pain, so do sentimentalists find a keen relish in performing secret penance for self-accused offences. Thus they become righteous to their own hearts, and evade, as they hope, the public scourge." 1.

Earlier in the same work, Meredith states:

"Despair, as I have said before, is a wilful business, common to corrupt blood, and to weak, woful minds; native to the sentimental-ist of the better order." 2.

WOMEN AND EGOISM:

In Meredith's mind, as we have hinted, sentimentalism and egoism are so closely allied that the latter is regarded as an outgrowth of the former. There is no subject upon which he is so eloquent or so emphatic as upon the instinctive love of self; there is none about which his aphorisms play so freely or show to better advantage. The sex of the egoist, Meredith observes, makes little difference; and yet he sees that in his own sex self-love is more common and deeper rooted.

In all his works, he has dealt in some manner with the effects and degrees of egoism, but it is in The Egoist

1. Sandra Belloni p. 128

2. Ibid p. 27

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Further in the same work, Meredith states:

"Despair, as I have said before, is a willful business, common to corrupt blood, and to weak, worn minds; native to the sentimental-ist of the better order." 2.

WOMEN AND EGOTISM:

In Meredith's mind, as we have hinted, sentimentalism and egotism are so closely allied that the latter is regarded as an outgrowth of the former. There is no subject upon which he is so eloquent or so emphatic as upon the instinctive love of self; there is none about which his aphorisms play so freely or show to better advantage. The sex of the egoist, Meredith observes, makes little difference; and yet he sees that in his own sex self-love is more common and deeper rooted. In all his works, he has dealt in some manner with the effects and degrees of egotism, but it is in The Egoist

that he has given a complete and brilliant picture of the greatest egoist of all time, Sir Willoughby Patterne. Writing in an epigrammatic fashion - with interludes of metaphor - he defines this type of individual:

"The egoist is our fountain-head primeval man: the primitive is born again, the elemental reconstituted. Born again, with new conditions, the primitive may be highly polished of men, and forfeit nothing save the roughness of his original nature. He is not only his father, he is ours; and he is also our son. We have produced him, he us. Such were we, to such are we returning; not other, sings the poet, than one who toilfully works his shallop against the tide 'si brachia forte remisit:' -- let him haply relax the labour of his arms, however high up the stream, and back he goes, 'in pejus' to the early principle of our being, with seeds and plants, that are as carelessly weighed in the hand and as indiscriminately husbanded as our humanity.

"Poets on the other side may be cited for an assurance that the primitive is not the degenerate; rather is he a sign of the indestructibility of the race, of the ancient energy in removing obstacles to individual growth; a sample of what we would be, had we his concentrated power. He is the original innocent, the pure simple. It is we who have fallen; we have melted into society, diluted our essence, dissolved. He stands in the midst monumentally, a landmark of the tough and honest old ages, with the symbolic alphabet of striking arms and running legs, our early language, scrawled over his person, and the glorious first flint and arrow-head for his crest; at once the spectre of the kitchen-midden and our ripest issue.

"But Society is about him, the occasional spectacle of the primitive dangling on a rope has impressed his mind with the strength of his natural enemy; from which uncongenial sight he has turned shuddering hardly less to behold the blast that is blown upon a reputation where one has been disrespectful of the many. By these means, through meditation on the contrast of circumstances in life, a pulse of imagination has begun to stir,

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and he has entered the upper sphere, or circle of spiritual egoism; he has become the civilized egoist; primitive still, as sure as man has teeth, but developed in his manner of using them." 1.

With this sketch of the egotistical person, it will not be surprizing to realize that Meredith has not limited himself to portraying the male egoist, but has revealed egotistical tendencies in the female of the species as well. With the insight of the Comic Muse, he pierces the real sentiment behind each character's remarks and allows us to listen to the "dainty rogue in porcelain" discuss egoism in women with Laetitia Dale. Clara Middleton discourses in her usual brilliant and epigrammatic fashion as she questions Laetitia:

"Have you ever known a woman who was entirely an Egoist?"

"Personally known one? We are not better than men."

"I do not pretend that we are. I have latterly become an Egoist, thinking of no one but myself, scheming to make use of every soul I meet. But, then, women are in the position of inferiors. They are hardly out of the nursery when a lasso is round their necks; and if they have beauty, no wonder they turn it to a weapon and make as many captives as they can. I do not wonder! My sense of shame at my natural weakness and the arrogance of men would urge me to make hundreds captive, if that is being a coquette. I should not have compassion for those lofty birds, the hawks. To see them with their wings clipped would amuse me. Is there any other way of punishing them?"

"Consider what you lose in punishing them."

"I consider what they gain if we do not." 2.

1. The Egoist p 398 & 399.

2. Ibid p 160

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Thus when Sir Willoughby has proposed to Clara, she answers, "I must be myself to be of any value to you, Willoughby." And Meredith comments:

"She would not burn the world for him; she would not, though a purer poetry is little imaginable, reduce herself to ashes, or incense or essence, in honour of him; and so, by love's transmutation, literally be the man she was to marry. She preferred to be herself, with the egoism of woman!" 1

WOMEN AND MAN'S EGOISM:

The author does not hesitate by aphoristic means to expose the effects of man's egoism upon women, drawing as an example the domination imposed by Sir Willoughby upon Laetitia Dale and Clara Middleton. Thus he places a generalization on Clara's lips:

....."the ideal of conduct for women is to subject their minds to the part of an accompaniment." 2

Later on when Sir Willoughby feels that he has been quite naturally blessed by Providence with a good woman, Meredith gives us one of his best aphorisms:

"The love season is the carnival of egoism, and it brings the touch stone to our natures. I speak of love, not the mask, and not of the flutings upon the theme of love, but of the passion; a flame having like our mortality, death in it as well as life, that may or may not be lasting." 3

Another truism, explaining the attitude of the typical egoist toward the woman he would have, is found in the hundred and fourth chapter of the thirteenth volume of the Book of Egoism, where it is written:

1 The Egoist p 46

2 Ibid p 100

3 Ibid p 110

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typical egoist toward the woman he would have, is found
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volume of The Book of Egoism, where it is written:

"Possession without obligation to the object possessed approaches felicity."

A lover of aphorism himself, Meredith was unable to refrain from parsing this one quoted from *The Book*. He notes that:

"Possession is the rarest condition of ownership. For example: the possession of land is not without obligation both to the soil and tax-collector; the possession of fine clothing is oppressed by obligation; gold, jewelry, works of art, enviable household furniture, are positive fetters: the possession of a wife we find surcharged with obligation. In all these cases, possession is a gentle term for enslavement, bestowing the sort of felicity attained to by the helot drunk. You can have the joy, the pride, the intoxication of possession; you can have no free soul. But there is one instance of possession, and that the most perfect, which leaves us free, under not a shadow of obligation, receiving ever, never giving, or if giving, giving only of our waste; as it wereby form of perspiration, radiation, if you like; unconscious poral bountifulness; and it is a beneficent process for the system. Our possession of an adoring female's worship is this instance.

"The soft cherishable Parsee is hardly at any season other than prostrate. She craves nothing save that you continue in being,- her sun; which is your firm constitutional endeavor; and thus you have a most exact alliance; she supplying spirit to your matter while at the same time presenting matter to your spirit, verily a comfortable apposition. The Gods do bless it." 1

Meredith has hinted that "young women are trained to cowardice" 2 and continues:

"They are trained to please man's taste, for which purpose they soon learn to live out of themselves, and look on themselves as he looks." 3

1. The Egoist p. 132

2. Ibid p 248

3. Ibid p 248

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Meredith is not blind however to the tendency of some women to subject themselves to men of the type of Wilfrid Pole or Sir Willoughby Patterne, both sentimental egoists. It would likewise be inconsistent with the character of Clara Middleton as Meredith has drawn her, were she blind to the same tendency. She has read the shallowness in the master of Patterne Hall since her arrival, and thus it is that she draws this conclusion in the conversation with Laetitia to which we have already referred: (p.13)

"....Women who are called coquettes make their conquests not of the best of men; but men who are egoists have good women for their victims; women on whose devoted constancy they feed; they drink it like blood." 1

WOMEN'S EQUALITY WITH MAN:

From aphoristic utterances on women and egoism and the effect of man's egoism upon women, we turn quite naturally to those maxims which are concerned with women and their social and intellectual equality with men. To Meredith the question of the relations between the sexes was one of utmost importance, involving, as we have already pointed out, not merely a greater suffrage **for** women but a broader vision for them in a world that was still essentially masculine. For the best understanding of the novelist's attitude in this regard, it would be natural to study the heroines whom he has created, - his Clara Middleton, Lucy Desborough,

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Rose Jocelyn,- but for our purpose we shall view the stand he takes in those aphorisms which he has contributed on the subject. There can be no doubt that Meredith is allowing Diana to speak for him when she exclaims with a twist of irony:

"Men may have rounded Seraglio Point;
they have not yet doubled Cape Turk." 1

Her creator quotes this as "one sentence out of many, though we find it to be but the clever literary clothing of a common accusation." 2 It is the accusation, however, which gives at a glance a comprehensive idea of the stand which the author takes on the whole problem of women's rights. It establishes him as one who has seen through the pseudo-civilized treatment of women. To all appearances, woman is no longer regarded in the light of an Easterner, but the fact remains that man has not yet deigned to regard her as an equal.

Meredith would be even more explicit of Diana's generalization:

"It is war, and on the male side, Ottoman war; her experience reduced her to think so positively. Her main personal experience was of the social class which is primitively venatorial still, canine under its polish." 3

The improvement of society, he believed, depends upon the acknowledged and enforced equality of both sexes. An ideal marriage will not be attained until

1 Diana p 7

2 Ibid p 7

3. Ibid p 7, 8

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such equality is recognized. It is Meredith's aim to emphasize the individuality of woman and to demonstrate the power and nobility that are hers. Clara is pictured admiring Vernon Whitford's salutary life of sacrifice.

She was

"almost imagining she might imitate him, when the clash of a sharp physical thought: 'the difference! the difference!' told her she was woman and never could submit. Can a woman have an inner life apart from him she is yoked to? She tried to nestle deep away in herself: in some corner where the abstract view had comforted her, to flee from thinking as her feminine blood directed. It was a vain effort. The difference, the cruel fate, the defencelessness of women, pursued her, strung her to wild horses' backs, tossed her on savage wastes. In her case duty was shame: hence, it could not be broadly duty. That intolerable difference proscribed the word." 1

Clara's attempt to decide whether Vernon was an exception to the egoism found in the very walls of Patterne Hall gives rise to another of Meredith's aphorisms and one tinged with the irony of his pen: "Maidens are

commonly reduced to read the masters of their destinies by their instincts; and when these have been edged by over-activity, they must hoodwink their maidenliness to suffer themselves to read: and then they must dupe their minds, else men would soon see they were gifted to discern." 2

Diana Merion possessed, among her many aphorisms, one on the position of women. It was perhaps because "she saw their existing posture clearly, yet believed, as men disincline to do, that they grow",- that she could

1 The Egoist p 201

2 Ibid p 206

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"In their judgments upon women, men are females, voices of the present (sexual) dilemma." 1

"The greater loneliness of women" we are told "is due to the prescribed circumscription of their minds, of which they become aware in agitation. Were the walls about them beaten down they would understand that solitariness is a common human fate and the one chance of growth like space for timber." 2

Diana also informs us that "the beginning of a motive life with women must be in the head, equally with men", although Meredith points out that this was "by no means a truism when she wrote." 3

There is no one of the novelist's characters so given to aphoristic phrases on woman's equality as Diana of the Crossways. Whether from personal experience or from an instinctive knowledge of human nature, she is capable of emitting a veritable volley of generalizations on this subject. Meredith explains that

"generally in her character of the feminine combatant there is a turn of phrase, like a dimple near the lips, showing her knowledge that she was uttering but a tart measure of the truth." 4

Another of her caustic remarks:

"Men do not so much fear to lose the hearts of thoughtful women as their strict attention to their graces." 5

Were we not aware of the close proximity of the Comic Muse in the composition of Meredith's phrases, we should be inclined to regard his aphorisms as para-

1 Diana p 10

2 Ibid p 11

3. Ibid p 11

4. Ibid p 11

5. Ibid p 11

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'I expect that woman will be the last thing civilized by Man,'"¹

it is consoling to hear Meredith regard this generalization as a "tremendous impertinence". In fact he writes:

"On the subject of Women, certainly the Aphorist seemed to lose his main virtue. He was not splenetic; nay, he proved in the offending volume (*The Pilgrim's Scrip*) he could be civil, courteous, chivalrous, towards them; yet, by reason of a twist in his mental perceptions, it was clear he looked on them as domesticated wild cats, ready, like the lady in the fable, to resume their natural habits when there was a little mouse to tear, and, after they had done so, not to be allowed to reappear as the seraphs we thought them when they had a silly male mortal to lure: in fact, to be stamped wild cats, to the dissipation of Illusion." ²

Meredith is aware that the aphorist's conclusion is quite generally arrived at by the masculine mind and as a consequence he makes use of it to show the arrogance of man in believing himself capable of "civilizing woman".

And yet, Meredith has not always placed his caustic aphorisms about women on the lips of a Sir Austin; he hurls darts of his own occasionally at the weaker sex. Thus: "An opinion formed by a woman is inflexible; the fact is not half so stubborn." ³

and again: "Who can hold her back when a woman is decided to move?"

At another time the *Pilgrim's Scrip* has said of woman:

1. The Ordeal p 2
2. Ibid p 2

3. *The Tragic Comedians* p 19

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"She is always at Nature's breast; not intending it as a compliment. Each woman is Eve throughout the ages; whereas the Pilgrim would have us believe that the Adam in men has become warier, if not wiser: and weak as he is, has learnt a lesson from Time. Probably the Pilgrim's meaning may be taken to be, that Man grows and Woman does not." 1

Later, Meredith referring to the same passage, makes this generalization:

"The Pilgrim may be wrong about the sex not growing: but its fashion of conducting warfare we must allow to be barbarous, and according to what is deemed the pristine, or wild cat, method." 2

Occasionally, then, Meredith introduces a witticism none too complimentary to woman; for the most part, however, he is their ardent defender and one man among many who seems to have "doubled Cape Turk".

WOMEN AND INTELLECT:

From scattered truisms expressed by Meredith himself or placed upon the lips of his characters, it is obvious that he holds in high regard the mental capacity and intellect of woman, considering her as possessed of even greater innate wisdom than man in many instances. He delights in creating a female aphorist, a Diana who thinks "in flashes", or a "rapid phraser" such as Mrs. Mont^ustuart Jenkinson. Some of the best wisdom from his pen comes to us through the words of his women characters.

Even the Egoist is given to aphorize upon intellect in woman:

"Cleverness in woman is not uncommon. Intellect

1. The Ordeal p 374

2. Ibid p 385

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"Cleverness in woman is not uncommon. Intellect

is the pearl. A woman of intellect is as good as a Greek statue; she is divinely wrought, and she is divinely rare." 1

When Percy Dacier, kept awake by the insistent bells in the village of Rovio, walked out at daybreak and unexpectedly met Diana, a wit-combat ensued. Diana appeared to have the greater power and Dacier "bowed to her conversible readiness." Meredith then comments:

".....When a woman lightly caps our strained remarks we gallantly surrender the leadership, lest she should too cuttingly assert her claim." 2

As Diana continued her remarks, Dacier "listened somewhat with the head of the hanged", for "a beautiful woman choosing to rhapsodize has her way, and is not subjected to the critical commentary within us." 3

It would be quite natural for a man who could create a Diana Merion to be entirely out of sympathy with a Lady Watkin, whose table could easily dispense with witty women, as well as witty men. Natural too, for Lady Watkin, having been deprived of a sufficient supply of it herself, to dislike intellect in other women.

"Brains in women she both dreaded and detested; she believed them to be devilish.....Women with brains, moreover, are all heartless: they have no pity for distress, no horror of catastrophes, no joy in the happiness of deserving. Brains in men advance a household to station; but brains in women divide it and are the wrecking of society." 4

Himself possessed of keen wit, Meredith delights to find it in his characters, particularly in his female

1 The Egoist p 342

2 Diana p 134

3 Diana p 136

4 Diana p 299

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characters. As Sir Willoughby found intellect in women at a premium, so Meredith found wit in them a scarcity. He comments:

"A witty woman is such salt that, where she has once been tasted, she must perforce be missed more than any of the absent, the dowering heavens not having yet showered her like very plentifully upon us." 1

In introducing his readers to Diana, Meredith proposes another aphorism:

"A witty woman is a treasure; a witty Beauty is a power." 2

A combination of both wit and beauty will produce no less than a queen, and

"...the well of true wit is truth itself, the gathering of the precious drops of right reason, wisdom's lightning; and no soul possessing and dispensing it can justly be a target for the world however well-armed the world confronting her." 3

None realized better than Meredith how witty women were liable to be regarded by others, particularly their own countrymen and hence, sardonically, he issued a truism:

"A quick-witted woman exerting her wit is both a foreigner and potentially a criminal." 4

SUMMARY OF MEREDITH'S ATTITUDE TOWARD WOMEN:

It is evident then from a selection of some of the most apt of the aphorisms pertaining to each phase of the subject, what Meredith's attitude toward women is. He has no sympathy for sentimentality in her. Egoism,

1 Diana p 142

2 Ibid p 2

3. Ibid p 2

4. Ibid p 91

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likewise, although less common in women than in men, is inexcusable; and the effect of man's egoism upon woman nothing less than tragic.

Moreover, Meredith shows by his aphorisms, particularly the metaphorical one about Seraglio Point, that he would conceive greater equality for the sex. At the same time he shows that the average attitude taken by men toward this equality and typified by Sir Austin Feverel's aphorism concerning the civilization of women is a presumptuous and impertinent one. He recognizes at the same time the equality already possessed by some women of wit and keen intellect, and with countless aphorisms, sums up his admiration of a "witty Beauty". It becomes obvious from his generalizations, that Meredith was one of the greatest friends that womankind had in the nineteenth century.

RELATIONS BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN:

Representative aphorisms can establish Meredith's point of view on women and men considered as separate individualities, and **also** his stand on the relations between the two. We have already indicated in some part, the stand taken by him on the question of "woman's rights"; it will be well now to pause over his aphorisms concerning friendship, and love. He does not conceive of friendship as something impossible between men and women, even between a Diana and a Lord Dannisburgh.

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FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN:

Meredith's opinion can be easily observed in Sir

Willoughby's words to Laetitia Dale:

"...friendship is the holiday of those who can be friends. Wives are plentiful, friends are rare." 1

The Egoist has asked Laetitia to retain her attitude of friendliness toward him:

"Thus he was led to dwell upon friendship, and the charm of the friendship of men and women, 'Platonism' as it was called. 'I have laughed at it in the world, but not in the depth of my heart. The world's platonic attachments are laughable enough. You have taught me that the ideal of friendship is possible - when we find two who are capable of a disinterested esteem. The rest of life is duty; duty to parents, duty to country.'" 2

Among his characters, Meredith has portrayed several friendships,- those between Clara and Vernon, Diana and Redworth-evolving into satisfactory marriages. As Laetitia and Clara discuss Vernon Whitford, Clara comments:

"The man who can be a friend is the man who will presume to be a censor." 3

The daring Beauchamp in the midst of a political campaign, crossed the channel in a terrific storm to satisfy the whim of Renée de Croisnel, a friend of his youth, from whom he had separated for ~~some~~ time. Talking of their separation, Renée said:

"It is in absence that we desire our friends to be friendship itself." 4

1. The Egoist p 34

2. Ibid p 33

3. Ibid p 326

4. Beauchamp p 204

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Another truism comes from the dialogue/Redworth and Diana when the former had gone with a letter from Lady Dunstane who had taken refuge at the Crossways. Redworth recalls the effect of Diana's action upon Emma, her friend:

"It comes to this, that the blow aimed at you in your absence will strike her, and mortally," said Redworth.

"Then I say it is terrible to have a friend," replied Diana, with her bosom heaving.

"Friendship, I fancy, means one heart between two." 1

There can be no question of the high regard in which Meredith held friendships if one is to study the course of his own, to read of the friends he has made immortal through his fiction or to glean his ~~ideal~~ of real friendships from his generalizations about them.

MEN AND WOMEN AND LOVE:

It would be natural for an author who regarded all forms of egoism in as unfavorable a light as we have shown that Meredith regarded ~~them~~ to hold love as an important passion because of its utter unselfishness. The part played by love in the lives of all, he sees is an important one particularly because it enables each of us to see ourselves in our own mirror.

To Meredith, love is the renunciation of self.

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In Barbara Belloni he bids us:

"Remember the constitution of love, in which

"a heart unaroused is pure selfishness, and a heart aroused heroic generosity; they being one heart to outer life." 1

Harry Richmond who has discovered something of the reliability of Princess Ottilia's friendship with Janet, decides to write the Princess. He asks, and answers himself epigrammatically:

"Is it any waste of time to write of love? The trials of life are in it, but in a narrow ring and a fierier. You may learn to know yourself through love, as you do after years of life, whether you are fit to lift them that are about you, or whether you are but a cheat, and a load on the backs of your fellows. The impure perishes, the inefficient languishes, the moderate comes to its autumn of decay - these are of the kinds which aim at satisfaction to die of it soon or late. The love that survives has strangled craving; it lives because it lives to nourish and succour like the heavens.

"But to strangle craving is indeed to go through a death before you reach your immortality.

"But again to write of a love perverted by all the elements contributing to foolishness, and foredoomed to chastisement, would be a graceless business....." 2

Meredith is of the firm belief that love is founded in "good gross earth" and yet he can visualize and rejoice in something peculiarly divine in its essence,- for him, love, being divine, breathes something of intangible exquisiteness as does the aphorism he places on Diana's lips:

"The young who avoid that region (of Romance) escape the title of fool at the cost of a celestial crown." 3

1. Sandra p. 185

2. Harry Richmond p 546

3. Diana p 9

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Love for Meredith always looks beyond the person who loves and encompasses the beloved in a relationship that is more than earthly. We get something of Meredith's interpretation of this idea in his description of Redworth who is in love with Diana. She gave him:

"comprehension of the meaning of love;
a word in many mouths not often explained." 1

With Diana, Redworth could see that love signified

"a new start in our existence, a finer shoot of the tree stoutly planted in good gross earth; the senses running their live sap, and the winds companioned, and the spirits made one by the whole-natured conjunction. In sooth, a happy prospect for the sons and daughters of earth, divinely indicating more than happiness: the speeding of us, compact of what we are, between the ascetic rocks and the sensual whirlpools, to the creation of certain nobler races, now very divinely imagined." 2.

Never does Meredith's power of language show to better advantage than in his description of his love scenes and never have his epigrams contained more real poetry than in those pertaining to love. It would be difficult to point to a more beautiful passage on love in all fiction than the one in The Ordeal called "A Diversion Played on a Penny-Whistle".

"The night-jar spins his dark monotony on the branch of the pine. The soft beam travels round them, and listens to their hearts. Their lips are locked.

"Pipe no more, Love, for a time! Pipe as you will you cannot express their first kiss; nothing of its sweetness, and of its sacredness nothing. St. Cecilia up aloft, before the silver organ-pipes of Paradise, pressing

1. Diana p 335

2. Ibid p 335

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"fingers upon all the notes of which Love is but one, from her you may hear it.

"So love is silent. Out in the world there, on the skirts of the woodland, the self-satisfied sheep-boy delivers a last complacent squint down the length of his penny-whistle, and, with a flourish correspondingly wry-faced, he also marches into silence, hailed by supper. The woods are still. There is heard but the night-jar spinning on the pine-branch, circled by moonlight."¹

Similarly, it would be difficult to point to a more beautiful epigram than the lover's petition:

"Give me purity to be worthy the good in her; and grant her patience to reach the good in me." 2

Meredith appreciates that language is incapable of expressing all that love means to the person possessed of it, because it transcends the powers of the individual to appreciate it,-

"Love may be celestial fire before it enters into the system of mortals. It will then take the character of its place of abode, and we have to look not so much for the pure thing as for the passion." 3

In all his love-scenes and in the loves of his various creations, Meredith has conceived creatures of actuality, surrounded by a heavenly halo of imagination which carries them into a world of their own while they remain simultaneously a part of our world. Meredith cannot forget the importance of imagination in the region of love, and, consequently, when the Egoist tried to "slew" it in his wooing of Clara Middleton, the author

1. The Ordeal p 195,196. 3. Tragic Comedians, Introd. p 2
2. Ibid p 419

proposes a general maxim:

"There is no direr disaster in love than the death of imagination." 1

To the author, complete frankness and understanding is necessary between two who would reap the full benefits of love. As a result he observes that silence practised by either one of the lovers:

"is commonly the slow poison used by those who mean to murder love." 2

In another place (p. 14) we have seen that

"the love season is the carnival of egoism" and so we are not surprised to find Meredith denouncing those males who never rise above self love even when they would attempt to woo another. He sees that woman must be allowed to experience love with liberty and not be bound by the egoism of a Sir Willoughby. He writes:

"..love is an affair of two, and is only for two that can be as quick, as constant in intercommunication as are sun and earth, through the cloud or face to face." 3

He continues in explanation:

"They take their breath of life from one another in signs of affection, proofs of faithfulness, incentives to admiration. Thus it is with men and women in love's good season. But a solitary soul dragging a log, must make the log a God to rejoice in the burden. That is not love." 4

The Egoist attempts to shut out the world from himself and the one he loves, justifying his stand, as did Sir Willoughby, in his wit-combat with Clara, to whom he said:

1. The Egoist p 400
2. Rhoda Fleming p 184

3. The Egoist p 328
4. Ibid p 329

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3. The Knight p 400
4. Ibid p 389

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2. Rhoda Fleming p 184

"But understand me, I mean, we cannot feel, or if we feel we cannot so intensely feel, our oneness, except by dividing ourselves from the world."

"Is it an art?"

"If you like. It is our poetry! But does not love shun the world? Two that love must have their substance in isolation." 1

Were we to weave together an even longer chain of Meredith's aphorisms on the subject of love, we would see that he finds it a

"blessed wand which wins the waters from the hardness of the heart, 2

that when in love

"we must deserve nothing, or the fine blooming of fruition is gone." 3

and that, paradoxically enough, the

"love of any human object is the soul's ordeal". 4

He aphorizes likewise on the various kinds of love:

"Old love reviving may be love of a phantom after all. We can, if it must revive, keep it to the limits of a ghostly love" 5

"at the age of forty, men that love, love rootedly. If the love is plucked from them, the life goes with it." 6

"Love may spring in the bosom of a young girl, like Hesper in the evening sky, a grey speck in a field of grey, and not to be seen or known, till surely as the circle advances the faint planet gathers fire, and coming nearer earth, dilates, and will and must be seen and known." 7

1. The Egoist p 63,64

2. Ordeal p 106

3. Ordeal p 142

4. Ordeal p 224

5. Beauchamp p 228

6. Tragic Com. p 134

7. Evan Harrington
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Probably the best epigrammatic description of love and one worthy to close the subject on, is that Meredith gives in description of Cecilia Halkett torn between the aspirations of her father and of Nevil:

"One may be as a weed of the sea while one's fate is being decided. To love is to be on the sea, out of sight of land." 1

YOUTH:

Meredith, as did a greater master Shakespeare, felt keenly the various stages in man's development. To the earliest stage of youth, he gave much careful thought, portraying several of his best characters at that period of life. He could visualize two sides to youth: its irresponsibility, impetuosity, inexperience on one hand and its charm and nobility on the **other**. Too alert to the comprehensiveness of the Comic Spirit to fail in understanding its follies, he pictures a Nevil Beauchamp or a Richard Feverel on their journey for the acquisition of experience. He expresses himself in aphoristic fashion: "Our comedies are frequently youth's tragedies." 2

One feels constantly, however, that Meredith is laughing with youth, rather than at it. In Rhoda Fleming when Edward closes the "black volume" pertaining to another part of his life, Meredith remarks:

"Young men easily fancy that they may do this, and then when the black volume is shut the tide is stopped. Saying 'I was a fool' they believe they have put an end to the foolishness. What father teaches them

1. Beauchamp p 329

2. Evan Harrington p 191

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"that a human act once set in motion
flows on forever to the great account?" 1

One of his best epigrams on youth is this:

"Our deathlessness is in what we do,
not in what we are. Comfortable youth
thinks otherwise." 2

Never is Meredith more observant than in his maxims
on a youth in love:

"A youth who is engaged in the occupation
of eating his heart, cannot shine to advantage,
and is as much a burden to himself as
he is an enigma to others." 3

At another place he remarks:

"When the youth is called upon to look
up, he can adore devoutly and ardently;
but when it is his chance to look down
on a fair head, he is, if not worse, a
sentimental despot." 4

His generalizations upon youth in love are made even more
interesting when we have met some of the young people in
his books: Richard Feverel passing through his ordeal,
Nevil Beauchamp leaving his political responsibilities at
Bevisham to answer the whim of a married Frenchwoman whom
he once loved, Evan Harrington in pursuit of Rose Jocelyn
and in defense of his sartorial heredity. "For," says
Meredith,

"When the soul of a youth can be heated
above common heat, the vices of passion
shrivel up and aid the purer flame." 5

Occasionally Meredith takes his readers aside, and,
apologizing for trying their patience, explains that

1. Rhoda Fleming p 125

2. Ibid p 125

3. Evan Harrington p 28

4 Sandra p 91

5 Vittoria p 82

"That a human act once set in motion
flows on forever to the great account." 1

One of his best epigrams on youth is this:

"Our despatchness is in what we do,
not in what we are. Comfortable youth
thinks otherwise." 2

Never is Meredith more observant than in his maxims

on a youth in love:

"A youth who is engaged in the occupation
of eating his heart, cannot aspire to advance,
and is as much a burden to himself as
he is an enigma to others." 3

At another place he remarks:

"When the youth is called upon to look
up, he can adore devoutly and earnestly;
but when it is his chance to look down
on a fair head, he is, if not worse, a
sentimental despot." 4

His generalizations upon youth in love are made even more
interesting when we have met some of the young people in
his books: Richard Feverel passing through his ordeal,
Revell Beauchamp leaving his political responsibilities at
Revelation to answer the whim of a married Frenchwoman whom
he once loved, Evan Harrington in pursuit of Rose Jocelyn
and in defense of his sartorial heresy. "For," says

Meredith,

"When the soul of a youth can be heated
above common heat, the vices of passion
arise up and bid the purer flame." 5

Occasionally Meredith takes his readers aside, and,

apologizing for trying their patience, explains that

1. Rose Fleming p 185
2. Id. p 185
3. Evan Harrington p 28
4. Sandra p 91
5. Victoria p 82

character and wisdom are things that must come with age and experience. He finds that "most youths are like Pope's women,- they have no character at all. And indeed a character that does not wait for circumstances to shape it, is of small worth in the race that must be run. To be set too early, is to take the work out of the hands of the sculptor who fashions men." 1

Diana's truism on youth and old age is apparently expressive of Meredith's attitude:

"The very young men and the old are our hope. The middle-aged are hard and fast for existing facts!" 2

It is not only in Meredith's aphorisms, however, that we derive an idea of his attitude toward young people. In many other aphorisms throughout his works where he has taken a youthful attitude, an energetic zeal and a freshness of view, we see him as the champion of all the world's Feverels and Beauchamps.

NATURE:

We shall not attempt in this study to do more than call attention to the part played by Nature in the novels of Meredith, by mentioning a few of his more important aphorisms on the subject. It is really only through a knowledge of his poetry that one can arrive at an appreciation of his attitude toward Nature and its relation to man.

Mr. J.P. Priestley in his study of Meredith, has contributed one of the best interpretations of the

1. Evan Harrington p 50
2. Diana p 123

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Mr. J. F. Priestley in his study of Meredith, has

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author's philosophy of Nature. He says it can best be understood by comparison with the nature poetry of Wordsworth,

"But to Meredith there are no lost Edens and burning remembrances of Heaven; Man is not exiled here for a term, but is himself a creature of earth, a product, the highest we know, of Nature, who becomes conscious of herself in him. There are two well-known lines of Wordsworth's that, curiously enough, can be more aptly applied to Meredith's attitude than to their author's:

"Nature never did betray
The heart that loved her."

a deep-seated belief that finds its expression directly or indirectly in so much of Meredith's work, whether he is describing, in a lyric, a moment when he turns to her in sorrow and desolation, or tells us how one of his characters, like Diana of the Crossways renews her strength and confidence and sanity in the face of Nature. And this is because we are Earth's creatures, drawing our primary sustenance from Nature:

'On her great venture, Man,
Earth gazes while her fingers **dint the breast**
Which is his well of strength, his home of rest,
And fair to scan.....

.....

"Why then, Man and Earth being so close, should he ever have denied her? Why is not everything an exquisite harmony? The answer is that she has produced in him a self-conscious being, and with self-consciousness comes the Self. This is his glory and this is his danger.....Meredith saw in religion, as it is usually presented and understood, the shadow of this monstrous Egoism, mis-shaping all life in its desire to proffer easy consolation, destroying the proper balance and paralysing rightful effort.Strength, he tells us, is gained only by service, trained by endurance, shaped by

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devotion: 'Strength is not won by miracle or rape'. 1

Meredith sees quite clearly that the "natural instincts" in man, although to a certain sense animal, are good instincts in that they are associated with our spiritual life. Native impulses, if followed correctly, lead to a higher and a better life. From this theory springs one of the best aphorisms in the Pilgrim's Scrip:

"Let us remember that Nature, though heathenish, reaches at her best to the footstool of the Highest. She is not all dust, but a living portion of the spheres. In aspiration it is our error to despise her, forgetting that through Nature only can we ascend." 2

Nature requires that we assume a courageous outlook toward life but at the same time - and more important - it shows the path to a belief in a greater Power than Nature. If hope and faith are strong enough, nothing, not even death, will prevent us from attaining our hope and aspiration. Diana, a creature as near to the heart of Nature as any of Meredith's characters, expresses this view of life aphoristically in her conversation with Emma. Lady Dunstane has asked Diana if she is not beginning to think hopefully once more and she receives this answer:

"Who can really think and not think hopefully? You were in my mind last night, and you brought a little boat

1. Priestley p 69 - 73

2. Ordeal p 240

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"Who can really think and not think
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"to sail me past despondency of life and the fear of extinction. When we despair or discolour things, it is our senses in revolt, and they have made the sovereign brain their drudge. I heard you whisper, with your very breath in my ear, 'There is nothing the body suffers that the soul may not profit by.' That is Emma's history, with that I sail into the dark; it is my promise of the immortal: teaches me to see immortality for us. It comes from you, my Emmy." 1

It was love of Nature, according to Meredith which brought about "the convalescence of a mind distraught" and helped Diana to regain both physical and mental power:

"Thus does Nature restore us, by drugging the brain and making her creature confidingly animal for its new growth." 2

We find that all of Meredith's pages are permeated with the consciousness of the power of Nature, although it is difficult to point to many definite truisms which explain his creed.

SPIRITUALITY, PRAYER, AND GOD:

The discussions of Nature and Man is of necessity a prelude to Meredith's ideas of the real values in life, to his attitude toward prayer, spirituality and the Maker. He believes profoundly in the thriving of the spirit, accompanied by the salutary use of the senses. From his aphorisms we learn that:

"The victory over the world, as over Nature, is over self" 3

1. Diana p 363

2. Ibid p 319

3. The Egoist p 45

"to sell me past responsibility of life and the fear of extinction. When we despair or discover things, it is our senses in revolt, and they have made the sovereign brain their bridge. I heard you whisper with your very breath in my ear, 'There is nothing the body suffers that the soul may not profit by.' That is Nature's history, with that I sell into the dark; it is my promise of the immortal: teaches me to see immortality for me. It comes from you, my Nanny. I

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"to have the sense of the eternal in life is a short flight for the soul, to have had it is the soul's vitality." 1

Just as Meredith, Diana discovered to her advantage that

"all life is a lesson that we live to enjoy but in the spirit." 2

Meredith finds that among Diana's flashes of brilliancy

"touches inward are not absent"; for she can produce,

among others, this truism:

"Palliation of a sin is the hunted creature's refuge and final temptation. Our battle is ever between spirit and flesh. Spirit must brand the flesh that it may live." 3

As Dr. Shrapnel is recognized as the voice for many of Meredith's political views, so he has given spiritual maxims worthy of his creator. One of the precepts given Beauchamp by his moralist recalls Meredith's philosophy:

"We who interpret things heavenly by things earthly must not hope to juggle with them for our pleasures, and can look to no absolution of evil acts." 4

Although it matters little for our purpose here, the fact is that, despite his many aphorisms pertaining to spiritual acts and moods, Meredith believed "only occasionally" in a Maker to Whom he might pray. Much of his time was occupied in a worship of pantheism; only part of his devotions took into consideration the

1. Diana p 10

2. Ibid p 318

3. Ibid p 10

4. Beauchamp p 363

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possibility of a definite God. 1.

Nevertheless, he was a firm believer in the efficacy of prayer as his precepts indicate. He allows his views to be expressed through Dr. Shrapnel in his letters to Beauchamp:

"He who has the fountain of prayer in him will not complain of hazards. Prayer is the recognition of laws; the soul's exercise and source of strength, its thread of conjunction with them....."

He continues:

"We make prayer a part of us, praying for no gifts, no interventions, through the faith in prayer opening the soul to the undiscerned. And take this, my Beauchamp, for the good in prayer, - that it makes us repose on the unknown with confidence, makes us flexible to change, makes us ready for revolution, - for life then! 2

In Dr. Shrapnel's epigrammatic letter we learn that he believes prayer to be good, and he counsels Beauchamp to use it in happiness and in sorrow:

"The infidel will not pray; the creed slave prays to the image in his box"

"Ours is the belief that humanity advances beyond the limits of creeds, is to be tied to none." 3

What better aphorism than the one from Sir Austin's notebook: "Who rises from prayer a better man, his prayer is answered." 4

Above all else, Meredith's attitude is always that of a philosopher who recognizes a religion of ethical codes, not of love. Spirituality is a flower that

1. Authority - J.B.Priestley:George Meredith p 81

2. Beauchamp p 268

4. Ordeal p 430

3. Ibid p 260, 268

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"most of our spiritual guides neglect
the root to trim the flower" 1

he reiterates that

"it is the soul which does things in
life, - the rest is vapour." 2

Meredith conceives that the path of reason is the only road to spiritual growth, and the subjection to Nature is a real advance toward spiritual development. There is one other precept Meredith would have us always recall:

"it has been established that we do not wax diviner
by dragging down the Gods to our level." 3

Perhaps none of Meredith's prose aphorisms express his feeling about our spiritual duties so well as a quatrain sung by Vittoria in the opera of Camilla:

"Our life is but a little holding, lent
To do a mighty labour: we are one
With heaven and the stars when it is spent
To serve God's aim: else die we with the sun".4

APHORISMS ON MISCELLANEOUS SUBJECTS:

So far we have attempted to glean from his aphorisms something of Meredith's attitude toward men, women, and youth, toward the relations that should exist between men and women in friendship, and love. and love. We have seen, too, his aphoristic utterances concerning sentimentalism, sentimental egoism, the equality of the sexes, with, and intellect in women, and about woman's equality with man. His maxims on Nature and the part

1. Beauchamp p 487

2. Tragic Comedians p 49

3. Beauchamp p 360

4. Vittoria p 206

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1. Beauchamp p 487
 2. Tragic Comedians p 49
 3. Beauchamp p 550
 4. Vittoria p 205

played by Nature in his philosophy of life, on man's need of prayer and of spiritual guidance, have also been considered. We have now to give some attention to more general aphorisms which contain much of Meredith's wit and wisdom, but which are less easily catalogued in the divisions already mentioned. He can treat of a virtue:

"....Patience is our beneficent fairy
godmother, who brings us our harvests in
the long result." 1

or a vice:

"Gossip must often have been likened
to the winged insect, bearing pollen to the
flowers; it fertilizes many a vacuous reverie." 2

"Gossip is a beast of prey that does
not wait for the death of the creature it
devours." 3

"The man possessed by jealousy is never in
need of matter for it; he magnifies; grass is
jungle, hillocks are mountains." 4

It is not surprising that a man who brought so
much zest to life himself, should aphorize on the value
of enthusiasm:

"Enthusiasm is a heaven-sent steeplechaser,
and takes a flying leap of the ordinary barriers;
it is more intrusive than chivalry, and has a
passion to communicate its ardour." 5

"Nonsense of enthusiasts is very different
from nonsense of ninnies." 6

"Enthusiasm has the privilege of not knowing
monotony." 7

It is interesting to hear what Meredith - who has
been accused of being a cynic, has to say about
cynicism:

1. Diana p 228

2. Diana p 257

3. Ibid p 257

4. The Egoist p 256

5. Ordeal chap. 42
p. 552

7. Diana p 330

5. Diana p 114

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| 1. <u>Diary</u> p 238 | 4. <u>The Point</u> p 238 | 7. <u>Diary</u> p 230 |
| 2. <u>Diary</u> p 237 | 5. <u>Original Chap.</u> 48 | 8. <u>Diary</u> p 114 |
| 3. <u>Diary</u> p 237 | 6. <u>Diary</u> p 237 | |

"...Cynicism is intellectual dandyism with the coxcomb's feathers; and it seems to me that cynics are only happy in making the world as barren to others as they have made it for themselves." 1

Although Meredith places this epigram on Clara's lips, it seems to express his own feelings on the subject. We will see, too, that any cynicism of which the author may have been guilty, was that of an idealist who, in his conception of an ideal world, finds the sins of this world in need of remedy. Possibly this observation combines cynicism and idealism:

"It is still a good way from the head of the tallest of men to the stars." 2

This one easily admits of a tinge of cynicism:

"Our dreams of heroes and heroines are cold glitter beside the reality." 3

Very often, Meredith composes aphorisms on truths known to all of us, but expresses them in such a way that we are aware for the first time of their importance. For example:

"In action, Wisdom goes by majorities." 4

"Intellectual differences do not cause wounds except when very unintellectual sentiments are behind them." 5

"What a woman thinks of woman is the test of her nature." 6

"Convictions are generally first impressions that are sealed with later prejudice." 7

We have spoken before of Meredith's unusual

1. The Egoist p 63
2. Sandra p 4
3. Ibid. p 261

4. Ordeal p 31
5. Beauchamp p 193

6. Diana p 10
7. Beauchamp p 145

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1. The Scarlet p 68 4. Ordeal p 21
2. Sandra p 4 5. Beauchamp p 192
3. Lilla p 261 6. Diana p 19
7. Beauchamp p 145

understanding of human nature and his keen powers of observation. Aphorisms like the following testify to his alertness to human behaviour:

"The hero of two women must die and be wept over in common before they can appreciate one another." 1

"The reason why men and women are mysterious to us, and prove disappointing' (we learn from The Pilgrim's Scrip is) that we will read them from our own book: just as we are perplexed by reading ourselves from theirs.'" 2

"There's pitch and tar in politics as well as on shipboard." 3

"We women miss life only when we have never met the man to reverence." 4

"That small motives are at the bottom of many illustrious actions is a modern discovery." 5

One might extend the list indefinitely, exemplifying in countless different ways the direction and form taken by Meredith's wisdom. It is our purpose now to turn to a different phase of the aphorism, - to study, not its subject matter, but the mediums through which it is expressed in his novels.

MEDIUMS FOR EXPRESSING APHORISMS:

In the mind of anyone who has read Meredith's work, and perceived some of his philosophical concepts in his letters, in his poetry and in his relations with men and women, there can be no question that he used the aphorisms in his novels to express his own philosophy of life. He seems to feel it necessary in order to

1. Egoist p 357
2. Ordeal p 342

3. Beauchamp p150
4. Diana p 261

5. Evan p 247

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life. He seems to feel it necessary in order to

express himself fully, to employ a device which will set before his readers the observations which he wishes to make,- and the device he has adopted is the aphorism.
 MEREDITH AS AN APHORIST:

Often an aphorism is expressed by the author himself, as he steps into the story in a manner that has been compared to that of the chorus in an old Greek drama. He seems to find that a compact form for the wealth of thought that looms within is what he needs more than anything else. To a great extent, this insertion of epigram as a summary of a situation portrayed in the novel, or the lesson to be derived from the actions of the characters, is refreshing. It cannot be denied, however, that Meredith, in his inevitable self-consciousness of style, has indulged in whole paragraphs of epigrammatic sentences which become tiresome and even boring. When we learn from him that:

"the slave of a passion thinks in
 a ring, as hares run: he will cease
 where he began." 1

or that

"you may start a sermon from stones to
 hit the stars," 2

we are nearly as delighted at the aptness of expression as the author himself must have been when he wrote.

But once the reader has been dragged through a whole series of pithy sentences within a single paragraph

1. Egoist p 228
2. Beauchamp p 239

express himself fully, to employ a device which will set before his readers the observations which he wishes to make, - and the device he has adopted is the aphorism. Often an aphorism is expressed by the author himself.

as he steps into the story in a manner that has been compared to that of the chorus in an old Greek drama. He seems to find that a compact form for the world of thought that looms within is what he needs more than anything else. To a great extent, this insertion of epigram as a summary of a situation portrayed in the novel, or the lesson to be derived from the actions of the characters, is refreshing. It cannot be denied, however, that frequently, in his inevitable self-consciousness of style, has intruded in whole paragraphs of epigrammatic sentences which become tiresome and even boring. When we learn from him that:

"The slave of a passion thinks it
a thing, as horses run: he will cease
where he begins." I

or that

"You may start a sermon from stones to
hit the stars." 2

we are nearly as delighted at the aptness of expression as the author himself must have been when he wrote. But once the reader has been dragged through a whole series of pithy sentences within a single paragraph

and without any particular uniqueness in expression, it appears obvious that Meredith is overdoing his part as an aphorist. Take the following digressive essay on Habit:

"One would like here to pause, while our worthy ancient feeds, and indulge in a short essay on Habit, to show what a sacred and admirable thing it is that makes flimsy Time substantial, and consolidates his triple life. It is proof that we have come to the end of dreams and Time's delusions, and are determined to sit down at Life's feast and carve for ourselves. Its day is the child of yesterday, and has a claim on tomorrow. Whereas those who have no such plan of existence and sum of their wisdom to show, the winds blow them as they list. Consider, then, mercifully the wrath of him on whom carelessness or forgetfulness has brought a snap in the links of Habit. You incline to scorn him because, his slippers misplaced, or asparagus not on his table the first day of a particular Spring month, he gazes blankly and sighs as one who saw the End. To you it may appear small. You call to him to be a man. He is; but he is also an immortal, and his confidence in unceasing orderly progression is rudely dashed."

1

So highly developed did this style of writing become in his novels, that he became ~~to be~~ more obscure with the production of each work until such labyrinthine passages as the Prelude to The Egoist were produced. From the employment of the aphorism, it was a natural step for Meredith to fall into the use of metaphor, a device which endeavors to charm the mind rather than to stimulate it.

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Whether in metaphor or aphorism, Meredith became
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words so that even from his passages of casual description a gem of wisdom might easily be rescued. Thus the descriptions of Algernon Blancove as

"The genius of Champagne luncheon
incarnate." 1

and of Emilia waiting: "as some grey lake lies,
full and smooth, awaiting the
star below the twilight." 2

are obvious metaphors, but

"solitude is pasturage for
a suspicion" 3

is both aphorism and metaphor.

However affected and overdone his aphorisms may have become at times, however much he may have strained imagery to create them, it is an undeniable fact that they are expressions of his nature and personality. Although some of his metaphorical digressions and epigrams are impediments in his story, in general, one comes upon an aphorism as a welcome summary of the stand Meredith has been taking upon a subject.

MEREDITHS CHARACTERS AS APHORISTS:

One noticeable fact about Meredith's aphorisms is that they are more often spoken by his characters than by the author himself. Rather than appear as wit, he chooses a Diana, an Adrian Harley, or a Mrs. Mountstuart, to perform the task for him. The temptation is strong to believe that he is using these characters as a protection, lest he as a single individual

1. Rhoda p 236
2. Sandra p. 137
3. Sandra p 226

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tion is strong to believe that he is using these

characters as a protection, lest he as a single individual

appear too witty. One almost pictures Meredith smiling at himself as he notices his own inability to resist the composition of an aphorism. He asks:

"A maker of proverbs - what is he but a narrow mind, the mouthpiece of a narrower?" 1

Did he really believe, with Diana, that his "lapidary sentences" had only

"the value of chalk-eggs, which lure the thinker to sit and tempt the vacuous to strain for the like"? 2

Even as an epigrammatist, he appreciates the fact that

"there is more in the world than the epigrams aimed at it contain." 3

Nor is Meredith confined to one or two carriers of his wisdom. He imbues as many as three or four characters within a novel with minds unusually adapted to epigrammatic dialogue. He can picture for us Diana who "thought in flashes" 4; Westlake "polishing epigrams under his eyelids" 5; or Vernon Whitford relying upon "Greek and Latin aphoristic shots" 6.

Although Westlake was the man of Diana's circle who was "the neatest in epigrams" 7, Lady Dunstane was a close rival among the "weaker sex" for she and Diana

"shot their epigrams profusely" 8.

With equal power Meredith relates how Mr. Grancey Lespel, a defeated Whig:

1. Order p 571

2. Diana p 7

7. Diana 232

3. Tragic Com. p 75

4. and 5. Diana p 8 and 261

8. Diana p 228

6. Egoist p 263

opposed to the... the almost... the almost...

at himself as he... his own... to...

the... of... the... the...

A... of... - that is...
but... the... of...
I...

and he... with... that his...

...not only...

The... of... which...
have... to... and...
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even as an... he... the...

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For is... to one or two... of...

his... he... as... or...

within a... with... to...

...the... for... who...

is... "politics" under his...

...or... "Greek and...

Let's... about...

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...the... "V. ... was...

a... among the "weaker..." for the...

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With... power... for...

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the sere leaf in a man's mind." 1

and how Mrs. Desp^yel and Cecilia were chased away
from the smoking room:

"by the brilliancy of the politically
allusive epigrams" 2

Although the whole range of Meredith's novels is
surrounded either by aphorisms or aphorists, it is our
endeavor here to mention in particular only those which
receive the most emphasis in his work.

APHORISTS IN THE ORDEAL:

We turn naturally then to the author of "The
Pilgrim's Scrip" Sir Austin Feverel, a man disappointed
in marriage and left a widower with a son to whom he
must be both mother and father (a situation parallel to
the one in Meredith's own life). His notebook was
undoubtedly a wealth of wisdom, but unfortunately its
contents were not subjected by the Pilgrim to practical
application. One feels throughout that Sir Austin in
the role of an aphorist is not out of place because Mere-
dith has taken pains to create the sort of person who
might easily "pluck aphorisms from a razor-crop". 3

Moreover, despite the unlikelihood of a close
parallel between Meredith and Sir Austin, there is an
obvious reflection of the author's mind in many of the
epigrams in the Scrip. The attitude taken toward women
by the Pilgrim's book, could scarcely be accepted as
Meredith's but such thoughts as the following obviously

1. Beauchamp p 171

2. Beauchamp p 174

3. Ordeal p 49

"Look no further; sure sign of
the new life in a man's mind." I

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Meredith's but such thoughts as the following obviously

are his personal convictions:

"For this reason so many fall from God who have attained to Him; that they cling to Him with their Weakness, not with their Strength." 1

"In all cases where two have joined to commit an offense, punish one of the two lightly." 2

Sir Austin who is very evidently without any sense of humor, is nevertheless not without a supply of wisdom necessary to the maker of aphorisms; and

"although he did not always say things new," he seems to have spoken "from reflection, feeling, and experience: the triad which gives a healthy utterance to Wisdom..." 3

The trouble with the Baronet was that he could not turn his wisdom from a theoretical principle to a practical use because

"the direct application of an aphorism was unpopular at Raynham". 4

It may have been that Meredith was defending himself from the accusation of cynicism when he wrote in explanation of Sir Austin's accredited cynicism:

"Thus he wrote: 'I am happy when I know my neighbor's vice.'

"And it was set down as the word of a cynic; when rightly weighed it was a plea for tolerance.

"He said again: 'Life is a tedious process of learning we are fools'.

"And this also is open to mild interpretation, if we do not take special umbrage at the epithet. For, as he observes, by way of comment:

1. Ordeal p 236

2. Ibid p 306

3. Ordeal p 1

4. Ibid p 108

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"'When we know ourselves fools, we are already something better.'" 1

We meet the Baronet throughout the novel, composing aphorisms and confiding them to his diary for the edification of his son and the continu^uance of his Shaddock Dogma. Sir Austin has undertaken the difficult task of reforming the world and for his purpose he has evolved a system which is extremely difficult to effect. The entire plot then becomes an explanation "in aphoristic fashion" of a Blossoming Season, an Ordeal and a heroine of tragedy called Mother Nature. Throughout the whole evolution of the system under which Richard is being educated, we are nourished and inebriated with the spiritual advice from the aphorist's pages. He observed that

"between simple Boyhood, and Adolescence - the Blossoming Season - on the threshold of Puberty, there is one unselfish hour: say, spirit-seed - time" 2

but his observation did him little good for he failed to estimate the part played by Nature during such periods. He might well instruct the youth that

"culture is halfway to Heaven" 3

and that "expediency is Man's wisdom; doing right is God's", 4

but by an irony of fate, his aphorisms had little success in preventing the Blossoming Season which reached a precipitous point with Richard's observation of the Baronet himself in an affectionate act of profound

1. Ordeal p 2

2. Ibid p 122

3 Ibid p 123

4 Ibid p 108

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gratitude to Lady Blandish! As the failure of the system begins in the first fatal episode of the hay-rick burning, the role of aphorist commences at the same time to be somewhat over-drawn. The picture of Richard's father outside farmer Blaize's cottage waiting for his son to return from his confession of guilt may give full evidence of Meredith's love of Nature and power of eloquence, but it certainly adds nothing to our love of the Baronet's aphorisms as

"in the dark, the dead leaves beating on his face, he drew forth the note-book, and with groping fingers traced out:

"there is for the mind but one grasp of happiness: from that uppermost pinnacle of Wisdom, whence we see that this world is well-designed'". 1

Later, in the youth's second ordeal when he has been separated from his Miranda, the Baronet produced

"a double-dealing sentence: 'to anchor the heart by any object, ere we have half traversed the world, is Youth's Foolishness, my son, Reverence Time! A better maxim, that, than your Horation.'" 2

If only Sir Austin could have heard that aphorism composed by his creator:

"There is nothing like a capital Theory for blinding the wise." 3

The character of Sir Austin, however, is that of a person we come to like, whether it be because of, or in spite of, his aphorisms. A man who wished to be, as Adrian Harley

1. Ordeal p 112

2. Ibid p 223

3. Ibid p 131

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expressed it, "Providence to his son", and who could nevertheless be sufficiently theoretical to aphorize in the crisis of his son's life, deserves at least our sympathy, if not our understanding. To remember Sir Austin Feverel is to remember his aphorisms; to forget Sir Austin is impossible.

Someone has said that all the Feverels are witty; nor can this be denied, for inmates of Raynham Abbey seem to have breathed the very essence of wit. The caustic utterances of one cousin, Adrian Harley, are redeemed only by that rascal's indefatigable sense of the comic. Although his epigrams always sting, they possess a good-sized grain of common sense. The Wise Youth arrived - partially by accident - at Richard's wedding - breakfast in time to proceed with the cake to those by whom it would be most appreciated. His first encounter was with dyspeptic Hippias and from the conversation that ensued, it appeared that neither lacked the power for epigrammatic expression.

Adrian asked: "How should you define Folly?"

"Hm!" Hippias meditated, who always prided himself on being oracular when such questions were addressed to him, "I think I should define it to be, a slide."

"Very good definition. In other words, a piece of orange-peel; once on it, your life and limbs are in danger, and you are saved by miracle. You must present that to the Pilgrim. And the Monument of Folly, what would that be?"

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Hippias meditated anew. "All the human race on one another's shoulders." He chuckled at the sweeping sourness of the instance.

"Very good," Adrian applauded, "or in default of that, some symbol of the thing, say, such as this of which I have here brought you a chip." 1.

In spite of his Mephistophelean conduct, Adrian is one of the most interesting of Meredith's characters and in the end the only one of the Feverels in whom Richard will confide.

"Some people", says Meredith, "are born green: others yellow. Adrian was born yellow." 2

The character sketch of Adrian is one of the most clever bits of Meredith's writing; from it we learn that

"The wise youth spread out[†] his mind to the System like a piece of blank paper." 3

By Sir Austin, women were supposed to be regarded as "the born accomplices of mischief" 4; or, as we have seen, "the last thing civilized by Man" 5; but never as aphorists of any rank. Possibly it was association with the Baronet that caused Lady Blandish to produce some of the most clever aphorisms in the Ordeal. At any rate, when she writes the Pilgrim to inform him that she has been doing her part in the System by keeping in communication with Lucy, she modestly proposes an excellent aphorism which has just:

1. Ordeal p 370

2. Ibid p 31

3. Ibid p 33

4. Ibid p 318

5. Ibid p 2

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"flitted through her":

"....I hope I have been really doing right! A good deed, you say, never dies; but we cannot always know - I must rely on you. Yes, it is, I should think, easy to suffer martyrdom when one is sure of one's cause! But then one must be sure of it. I have done nothing lately but to repeat to myself that saying of yours, No.54,C.7,P.S.: and it has consoled me, I cannot say why, except that all wisdom consoles, whether it applies directly or not:

"For this reason so many fall from God, who have attained to him; that they cling to him with their weakness, not with their strength."

"I like to know of what you were thinking when you composed this or that saying - what suggested it. May not one be admitted to inspect the machinery of Wisdom? I feel curious to know how thoughts - real thoughts are born. Not that I hope to win the secret. Here is the beginning of one (but we poor women can never put together even two of the three ideas which you say go to form a thought): 'When a wise man makes a false step, will he not go further than a fool?' It has just flitted through me." 1

We pass naturally from the wit at Raynham to that of Bessie Berry, who is in reality only a reproduction of Lady Blandish in what one might call more vulgar shadings. It is a long jump from the language of The Pilgrim's Scrip to the jagged dialect of "a bunch of black satin", but one sees readily that there was in her precepts a background of common sense frequently missing in those of Sir Austin. Underlying all her maxims is a knowledge of the ways of the world viewed

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from experience both vicarious and personal. When she learns that Richard and Lucy have been separated for three months, she delivers her famous generalization about "checked matrimony":

"We all know what checked perspiration is. It fly to the lungs, it gives ye mortal inflammation, and it carries ye off. Then I say checked matrimony is as bad. It fly to the heart, and it carries off the virtue that's in ye, and you might as well be dead!" 1

Bessie's sayings spring not from a wealth of education but from a deep sense of observation of this world's follies and sins, based upon her own bitter experience with Mr. Berry, who gave poor Bess nothing except her name.

Meredith has pictured Bess as she rocks her "contemplative person" before the fire, and yet one does not imagine her sitting down to think out her precepts; for these merely "flit" through her. Perhaps she herself has some word for it:

"One gets so addle-pated thinkin' many things. That's why we see wonder clever people al'ays goin' wrong - to my mind. I think it's al'ays the plan in a dielemmer to pray God and walk forward." 2

For "matrimonial wisdom" Mrs. Berry is unexcelled.

"When the parlour fire gets low, put coals on the ketchen fire!" 3

"Such is man! no use havin' their hearts, if ye dont have their stomachs." 4

1. Ordeal p 466

2. Ibid p 518

3. Ibid p 324

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"Such is man! no use havin' their hearts, if ye don't have their stomachs." 4

And the one Meredith called worthy a place in the Scrip:

"Kissing don't last: Cookery do!" 1

Merely from a discussion of four of the outstanding wits in The Ordeal, the book will be seen to be a wealth of aphorisms differing in their make-up as much as the characters differed in theirs. When one has finished the book, there is an impression of a huge bulk of profound wit which stands waiting to be absorbed. There is the sensation of irony in the failure of "The Pilgrim's Scrip" to accomplish its end, to bring up a boy untainted by the temptations of the world, there is similarly a little revulsion to the Wise Youth's caustic witticisms. Taken as a whole, however, the aphorisms are not unnatural to the characters as they have been created.

Virginia Woolf in her interesting centenary study of Meredith, comments upon the author's intention:

"....Since the first novel is always apt to be an unguarded one, where the author displays his gifts without knowing how to dispose of them to the best advantage, we may do well to open Richard Feverel first.... The style is extremely uneven. Now he twists himself into iron knots; now he lies flat as a pancake. He seems to be of two minds as to his intention. Irony comments alternates with long-winded narrative. He vacillates from one attitude to another. Indeed the whole fabric seems to rock a little insecurely. The baronet wrapped in a cloak; the county family; the ancestral home; the uncles mouthing epigrams in the dining-room; the great ladies flaunting and swimming; the jolly farmers slapping their thighs: all literally if spasmodically sprinkled with dried aphorisms from a pepper-pot called The "Pilgrim's Scrip" - what an odd

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"conglomeration it is! But the oddity is not on the surface; it is not merely that whiskers and bonnets have gone out of fashion; it lies deeper, in Meredith's intention, in what he wishes to bring to pass. He has been, it is plain, at great pains to destroy the conventional form of the novel..... And what is done so deliberately, is done with a purpose." 1

APHORISMS IN THE EGOIST:
In the Prelude of The Egoist, a chapter of which

only the last page is important, according to the author, Meredith first introduces his readers to the device which he employs throughout the book for casting the mirror of the Comic Spirit upon the actions of his characters. He explains that:

"the world is possessed of a certain big book, the biggest book on earth; that might indeed be called the Book of Earth; whose title is the Book of Egoism, and it is a book full of the world's wisdom. So full of it, and of such dimensions is this book, in which the generations have written ever since they took to writing, that to be profitable to us the Book needs a powerful compression." 2

Such then is the volume which illuminates the pages of The Egoist and furnishes a mouthpiece for the epigrams which Meredith wished to expound upon the subject of egoism. We have already seen how the Book supplies aphorisms to explain the attitude of the Egoist toward "possession without obligation", "an adoring female's worship" and toward women in general.

Sir Austin relieved himself by confiding an aphorism to the Scrip, Sir Willoughby seeks the conso-

1. (Woolf, Virginia: The Second Common Reader p 248)
2. The Egoist p 1

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APHORISMS IN THE REQUIEM:
In the finale of The Requiem, a chapter of which

only the last page is important, according to the author, Meredith first introduces his readers to the device which he employs throughout the book for casting the mirror of the Comic Spirit upon the actions of his characters. He explains that:

"the world is possessed of a certain big book, the biggest book on earth; that might indeed be called the Book of Earth; whose title is the Book of Requiem, and it is a book full of the world's wisdom. So full of it, and of such dimensions is this book, in which the generations have written ever since they took to writing, that to be profitable to us the book needs a powerful compression."

Such then is the volume which illuminates the pages of The Requiem and furnishes a mouthpiece for the epigrams which Meredith wished to expound upon the subject of egoism. We have already seen how the book supplies aphorisms to explain the attitude of the Requiem toward "possession without obligation", "an adoring female's worship" and toward women in general.

Sir Austin relieved himself by confiding an aphorism to the Scrip, Sir Willoughby seeks the conso-

lation of The Book. When the question of casting Laetitia into the arms of another confronted Sir Willoughby, he

"betook himself to The Book, and opened it on the execrable wiles of that foremost creature of the chase, who runs for life. She is not spared in the Biggest of Books. But close it."

Close it because, having been composed mostly by men,

"men naturally receive their fortification from its wisdom, and half a dozen of the popular sentences for the confusion of women... refreshed Sir Willoughby for his undertaking." 1

The use of a volume of aphorisms to illustrate the Egoist's actions is less common than the use of the Pilgrim's Notebook. Meredith himself frequently appears in The Egoist as an author philosophizing upon a situation or epitomizing a point of view.

In addition to the aphorisms of the Book and those uttered by Meredith himself, there appears a great deal of talent in the composition of aphorisms. Mrs. Mountstuart Jenkinson, the lady who always says "

"the remembered, if not the right, thing" 2 has the gift of clever phrasing which enables her, much to the distraction of all Sir Willoughbys, to talk in spontaneous epigrams. It was not at all uncommon at Patterne Hall for a single phrase of Mrs. Mountstuart's to induce comment among all the guests. In her laconic manner she characterized persons with a single descriptive phrase.

1. The Egoist p 134

2. Ibid p 9

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1. The book p 134

2. Ibid p 9

She pictures Laetitia:

"with a romantic tale on her eyelashes," 1
Whitford as "a Phoebus Apollo turned fasting friar" 2
and Sir Willoughby with a leg! It is small wonder that
Clara Middleton discovered in Mrs. Mountstuart a person
who could "tattoo" her "with epigrams". It was an
epigram launched in description of Clara herself that
created the greatest perplexity, particularly to Sir
Willoughby - and although Mrs. Mountstuart "like all
rapid phrasers, detested the analysis of her sentence", 3
the dialogue in which the Egoist challenges her phrase is
worth quotation:

"Why rogue?" he insisted with Mrs. Mountstuart,

"I said - in porcelain", she replied.

"Rogue perplexes me."

"'Porcelain' explains it."

"She has the keenest sense of honour."

"I am sure she is a paragon of rectitude."

"She has a beautiful bearing."

"The carriage of a young princess!"

"I find her perfect."

"And still she may be a dainty rogue in porcelain."

"Are you judging by the mind or the person, ma'am?"

"Both."

"And which is which?"

1. The Egoist p 9

2. Ibid p 10

3. Ibid p 43

The pictures flash:

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"The carriage of a young princess!"

"I find her perfect."

"And still she may be a dainty rogue in porcelain."

"Are you judging by the mind or the person, my lady?"

"Both."

"And which is which?"

"There's no distinction."

"Rogue and Mistress of Pattern do not go together."

"Why not? She will be a novelty to our neighborhood and an animation of the Hall."

"To be frank, rogue does not rightly match with me."

"Take her for a supplement."

"You like her?"

"In love with her! I can imagine life-long amusement in her company. Attend to my advice: Prize the porcelain and play with the rogue." 1

Dinner conversations at Patterne Hall must have been as witty as those at Raynham Abbey, or at the Crossways. In addition to Mrs. Mountstuart, there was the quick wit of the Irishman, DeCraye, the sententious sayings of Whitford, or the rich humour of Dr. Middleton. Even Laetitia, Clara and Willoughby could keep the phrases on the rebound. All could produce a phrase or epigram as if they were plucked from the air. Let us listen to a casual dinner conversation:

"How would you define a rough truth, Dr. Middleton?" said Mrs. Mountstuart.....

"A rough truth, madam, I should define to be that description of truth which is not imparted to mankind without a powerful impregnation of the roughness of the teller."

"It is a rough truth, ma'am, that the world is composed of fools, and that the exceptions are knaves," Professor Crooklyn furnished the example avoided by the Rev. Doctor.

"There's no distinction."

"Rogues and mistresses of pattern do not go together."

"Why not? She will be a novelty to our neighborhood and an animation of the Hall."

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the teller."

"It is a rough truth, madam, that the world is
composed of fools, and that the exceptions are known."
Professor Grosby finished the example avoided by
the Rev. Doctor.

"Not to precipitate myself into the jaws of the first definition, which strikes me as being as happy as Jonah's whale, that could carry probably the most learned man of his time inside without the necessity of digesting him," said DeCraye, "a rough truth is a rather strong charge of universal nature for the firing off of a modicum of personal fact."

"It is a rough truth that Plato is Moses atticizing," said Vernon to Dr. Middleton, to keep the diversion alive." 1

In this strain, the characters of the Egoist can converse for a whole chapter. From the passages quoted it is evident that Meredith is playing up the native wisdom of his characters too much. The Book of Egoism itself is not introduced a sufficient number of times to become tiresome, nor are the words which "sprang out" of Mrs. Mountstuart too frequently quoted. The sustained wit at dinner parties and elsewhere, however, becomes so overdone at times that the entire dialogue seems stilted and artificial; aphoristic utterances are too common to be natural. These facts do not necessarily condemn the aphorisms in The Egoist as entirely unreal, but they give evidence of an extra dose of Meredith in the dialogue of the characters.

APHORISMS IN DIANA OF THE CROSSWAYS:

We have already seen to some extent, the part played by aphorisms in Diana of the Crossways, and have observed that Diana is among the best of Meredith's wits. For some reason, her epigrams, however numerous, never admit of exasperation; they are as charming as the

1 The Egoist p 372,373

"Not to precipitate myself into the jaws of the first definition, which strikes me as being as happy as John's, that could carry probably the most learned man of his time inside without the necessity of digesting him," said George, "a rough truth is a rather strong charge of universal law for the fitting off of a modicum of personal fact."

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Goddess herself. In general, the aphorisms of Diana and her group represent a less serious wisdom than those of the Pilgrim's Scrip, and a lighter fancy plays about them. Diana had acquired from her father Dan Merion, a witty Irishman, the power to express herself in a spontaneous and sententious manner. Whether at an Irish Ball or at her own fireside, she delighted the group of which she was always the center. What she told Henry Wilmers was quite obviously true,- that she "read rapidly and thought in flashes - a way with the makers of phrases." 1

Perhaps the only common link between Diana and the man with whom she plunged into matrimony was in their phraseology, for he too "had neat phrases, opinions in packets". 2

The ordinary woman expecting to hear her lover announce that he was plighted to another woman, would scarcely have "descended the stairs revolving phrases of happy congratulation and the world's ordinary epigrams upon the marriage-tie, neatly mixed." 3

Diana did! When Diana is about to commit the greatest error of her life - to break the confidence intrusted to her by Dacier - she goes with Danvers through the streets of London at night. Intense as she is with the excitement of her premeditated act, she nevertheless has time

1. Diana p 8
2. Ibid p 53

3. Ibid p 204

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ment of her premeditated act, she nevertheless has time

to coin an epigram with the coolness of a philosopher:

"This (London) must be where the morrow is manufactured. Tell the man to wait. Or rather it's the mirror of yesterday: we have to look backward to see forward in life." 1

Lady Dunstane, a friend whose understanding of Diana never fails, plays her part too in the composition of aphorisms. Meredith says that these ladies

"shot their epigrams profusely"

and as we listen, we agree with him. Diana has been confessing her narrow escape from an elopement with Dacier:

"....In few things that we do, where self is concerned, will cowardice not be found. And the hallucination colours it to seem a lovely heroism. That was the second time Mr. Redworth arrived. I am always at Crossways, and he rescues me, on this occasion unknowingly."

"There's a divinity,...." said Emma, "When I think of it I perceive that Patience is our beneficent fairy godmother, who brings us our harvest in the long result."

"My dear, does she bring us our labourer's rations to sustain us for the day?" said Diana,

¶ "Poor fare, but enough." 2

It is at one of Diana's dinners that we get an after-taste of aphorism and metaphor, when Diana, to end a discussion, said of her own sex:

"We have entered Botany Bay." 3

To which Lady Dunstane makes the well-known retort:

"A metaphor is the Deus ex machina of an argument!" 4

1. Diana p 275

2. Ibid p 228

3 Ibid p 263

4 Ibid p 263

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"A metaphor is the Deus ex machina of an argument." 4

Many of the best of all Meredith's aphorisms he attributes to Diana:

"The light of every soul burns upward. Of course, most of them are candles in the wind. Let us allow for atmospheric disturbance." 1

"Service is our destiny in life or in death." 2

"All life is a lesson we learn to enjoy but in the spirit. 3

Redworth, Dacier, and Westlake occasionally contribute a worth while maxim, but the honours go to the women in the novel. The epigrams in Diana, then, are on the whole cleverly introduced and natural expressions of the author's wisdom.

APHORISMS IN THE AMAZING MARRIAGE:

In The Amazing Marriage, the last book which we shall consider separately, and the one which was the last to be written by Meredith, Dame Gossip, rather than Meredith, enters as a chorus and Captain Kirby's Book of Maxims supplies a medium for much wit. Dame Gossip says of Captain Kirby:

"He was a mechanician, a master of stratagems, and would say, that brains will beat Grim Death, if we have enough of them. He was a standing example of the lessons of his own Maxims for Men, a very curious book, that fetches a rare price now wherever a copy is put up for auction. I shudder at them as if they were muzzles of firearms pointed at me; but they were not addressed to my sex; and still they give me an interest in the writer who would declare, that "he had never failed in an undertaking without stripping bare to expose himself where he had been wanting in Intention and Determination." 4

1. Diana p 323

2. Ibid p 10

3. Ibid p 318

4. Amazing Marriage p 8

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The Old Buccaneer, if his maxims were not poetically expressed, were at least sound in their wisdom:

"~~Deliver~~ yourself by permit of your cheque on the Bank of Reason, and your account is increased instead of lessened." 1

"Precaution is the brave man's clean conscience." 2
He had included a special group of maxims for those of his sex who would marry. Among them was this one:

"There are marriages by the thousand every day of the year that is not consecrated to prayer for the forgiveness of our sins." 3

Captain Kirby, unlike Sir Austin,

"acted by the rule of his recommendations" 4
and moreover imparted his precepts to Carinthia. Although the Captain's Maxims do not appear very often in the book, when they do, Meredith usually enters to explain their meaning. The Old Buccaneer has written down a maxim:

"Friends may laugh; I am not roused -
My enemy's laugh is a bugle blown in the night."

and Meredith enlarges upon the thought in epigrammatic fashion:

"Our enemy's laugh at us rouses to wariness, he would say. He can barely mean, that a condition of drowsihead is other than providently warned by laughter of friends. An old warrior's tough fibre would, perhaps, be insensible to that small crackle. In civil life, however, the friend's laugh at us is the loudest of the danger signals to stop our course: and the very wealthy nobleman, who is known for **not** a fool, is kept from hearing it. Unless he does hear it, he can have no

1. Amazing Marriage p 455 4. Ibid p 334
2. Ibid p 187
3. Ibid p 289

The Old Proseman, if his maxims were not possibly

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"Deliver yourself by parts of your speech on
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dition of broadness is other than providently
warned by laughter of friends. An old warrior's
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it. Unless he does hear it, he can have no

1. Maxims p 455 4. Ibid p 454

2. Ibid p 187

3. Ibid p 282

"suspicion of its being about him: he cannot imagine such lèse-majesté in the subservient courtiers too prudent to betray a sign." 1

There are many times in Carinthia's life that she gained strength from those maxims of her father - which she remembered. Frequently, too, she would quote them as a defense of her actions: Thus:

"Look backward only to correct an error of conduct for the next attempt." 2

"One idea is a bullet, good for the day of battle to beat the foe." 3

We can readily see from a single conversation between Carinthia and her brother, Chillon, the extent to which the maxims have influenced thought among the Kirbys:

"For instance, did I hear 'Owain' when your Welsh friend was leaving?" Chillon asked.

"It was his dying wife's wish, brother."

"Keep to the rules, dear."

"They have been broken, Chillon."

"Mend them."

"That would be a step backward."

"The right one for defense!" father says

"Father says: 'The habit of the defensive paralyzes will.'"

"'Womanizes', he says, Carin. You quote him falsely to shield the sex....." 4

Gower Woodseer is not without some wit to contribute in the story, but it is mostly of metaphorical description.

1. Amazing Marriage p 364

2. Ibid p 392

3. Ibid p 401

4. Ibid p

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"Keep to the rules, dear."

"They have been broken, Chillon."

"Mind them."

"That would be a step backward."

"The right one for defense!" father says

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"'Womanizes', he says, Geminthia. You quote him falsely
 to shield the sex...."

Gower Woodseer is not without some wit to contribute

in the story, but it is mostly of metaphorical description.

In short, the novel, although a book of maxims runs through it like a theme, is not outstanding among

Meredith's novels as a mine of aphoristic wealth.

APHORISMS IN MEREDITH'S OTHER NOVELS:

In his other novels, Meredith makes aphorisms generally play a less important part. There are, of course, witty characters given to aphorizing:- Colney Durance and Simeon Fennellon in One of Our Conquerors; the Countess de Saldar, Dr. Shrapnel and Stukely Culbrett in Beauchamp's Career; Lady Charlotte Eglett in Lord Ormont and His Arminta; Mrs. Lovell in Rhoda Fleming.

The characters which serve as mouthpieces for Meredith's aphorisms may, I hope without heresy, be compared to the comedians on the stage: as soon as they appear we expect something worth while from them.

The Tragic Comedians is alone in its lack of any character as a mouthpiece for Meredith's wit; singular, too, in that there are very few of the epigrams usually looked for in his novels. It certainly does not follow as a natural result, but it is an interesting fact that this novel is the least significant of Meredith's works.

The Adventures of Harry Richmond, Sandra Belloni and its conclusion Vittoria possess in general less epigrammatic brilliancy and more simplicity of style. Although we have not regarded The Shaving of Shagpat as one of Meredith's novels because it is scarcely classi-

In short, the novel, although a book of maxims runs
 through it like a theme, is not outstanding among
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fiable as such, it is nevertheless important that in this **book** Meredith first began his manner of inserting poetic epigrams and elaborate metaphorical phrases.

From the publication of Shagpat "an Arabian Entertainment" until the appearance of The Amazing Marriage in 1895, Meredith retained the use of aphorisms and aphorists in the manner observed.

EFFECT OF APHORISMS ON MEREDITH'S LITERARY STYLE:

We have seen that Meredith's novels are veritable mines of aphorisms, expressed either by the author, by a character whom he has chosen as his mouthpiece, or in one of several collections of epigrams. What, then, is the effect of this gnomic deluge upon his literary style? Assuredly there have been times in the novels, when his use of effective dialogue has made his characters appear entirely unreal. Persons like Meredith may talk with sustained brilliance in real life, but there are very few Merediths in the world! On this matter, Mr. Clutton-Brock in his delightful essay on George Meredith has some interesting things to say:

".....Meredith's mouthpieces are always subsidiary and often unpleasant; like the wise youth in Richard Feverel. One feels that if one of his heroes had a turn for epigrams he could never be got to do anything except emit them. So he would never make a hero more witty than he could help, for he likes his heroes to be either men of action or delightful youths whom too much cleverness would spoil. He himself was not in love with cleverness and never aimed at it; he could not help it; it was a trick with him, like stammering; it was even an impediment to his

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"speech.....No one can read any of his novels, except perhaps Evan Harrington, without feeling that the writer is all the while fighting his way through impediments. He never, like some of his imitators, raises them so that he may set himself the task of climbing over them. He does not think much of these witty characters that he cannot do without. They have to be there because wit is his natural comment upon life, like poetry, and because he is as much a commentator as a creator. He chose the novel as his chief form of art not because he was a born story-teller, though he can tell stories well enough when he chooses, but because he needed a form loose enough to give employment to all the varied and conflicting activities of his mind. If he had had less genius, less power of speech, less understanding of men, he might have been an essayist; we cannot imagine a smaller Meredith a novelist at all. 1

Meredith's greatest handicap was probably the fact that he was too clever - so clever that it was impossible for him to exhaust his own wit without contributing some of it to his characters.

Coventry Patmore believed that this superlative cleverness detracted from Meredith's style as well as from his characterization:

"Distinction is also manifest in the prose of Mr. George Meredith when the cleverness is not too overwhelming to allow us to think of anything else; but, when the nose of epigram after epigram has no sooner reached the visual nerve than the tail has whisked away from it, so that we have had no time to take in the body, our wonder and bedazzlement make it sometimes impossible for us to distinguish the distinction if it be there." 2

1. Clutton-Brock, A. More Essays on Books Chapter on George Meredith Part I p. 26, 27.
2. (See Hammerton, J.B. George Meredith p 177, 178)

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James M. Barrie has been more friendly in his criticism of Meredith's epigrammatic style:

"Phrase-making is Mr. Meredith's passion. His books are as over-dressed as fingers hidden in rings....Were I to pick out Mr. Meredith's triumphs in phrase-making, I could tattoo the Contemporary with them - to use one of his own phrases. He has made it his business to pin them to his pages, as a collector secures butterflies. He succeeds, I believe, in this perilous undertaking as often as he fails. He must have the largest vocabulary of any living man.... If to avoid the conventional in phrases he puts words to fantastic uses, he shows that language which had become cold may still be beaten red-hot, and in the process he strikes out numberless sparks of thought. This thinking over words puts new life into literature." 1

What can become of an aphoristic style like Meredith's when it is subjected to the Comic Muse will be seen from the editions of Punch in 1890 and 1891. Mr. R.C. Lehmann contributed a series of novels which he called "Mr. Punch's Prize Novels", among them Joanna of the Cross Ways supposedly written by George Verimyth, author of Richard's Several Editions, The Aphorist and Shampoo's Shaving Pot. Mr. Lehmann, evidently feeling that Meredith's aphorists are not so clever as it is supposed, writes:

"Many are the tales concerning Joanna's flashing wit. There appeared many years back, in a modest shape that excited small interest among the reviewing herd, a booklet whereof the title furnished little if any indication to the contents. The Spinster's Reticule, for so the

1. (See Hammerton, J.A. George Meredith p 178, 179)

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"name ran, came forth with no blare of journalistic trumpets challenging approval from the towers of critical sagacity. It appeared and lived. But between its cardboard covers the bruised heart of Joanna beats before the world. She shines most in these aphorisms. Her private talk, too, has its own brilliancy, spun, as it was here and there, out of a museful mind at the cooking of the dinner or of the family accounts. She said of love that 'it is the sputter of grease in a frying-pan; where it falls the fire burns with a higher flame to consume it'. Of man, that 'he may navigate Mormon Bay, but he cannot sail to Khiva Point'. The meaning is too obvious it may be, but the thought is well imaged.

She is delightful when she touches on life. 'Two,' she says, 'may sit at a feast, but the feast is not thereby doubled.' And, again, 'Passion may lift us to Himalaya heights, but the hams are smoked in a chimney'. And this of the soul, 'He who fashions a waterproof prevents not the clouds from dripping moisture.' Of stockings she observes that, 'The knitting-needles are long, but the turn of the heel is a teaser.' Here there is a delightful irony of which matrons and maids may take note.

Such, then, was our Joanna - Joanna Meresia Spratt, to give her that full name by which posterity is to know her - an ardent, bubbling, bacon-loving girl-nature, with hands reaching from earth to the stars, that blinked egregiously at the sight of her innocent beauty, and hid themselves in winding clouds for very love of her." 1

Mr. Lehmann seems to be straining his analogy when he marries Joanna to Sir John Spratt, who is a parody on Sir Austin Feveral, but the scene at their dinner table is worth quoting:

"They sat at table together. Binns, the butler, who himself dabbled in aphorisms, and had sucked wisdom from the privy perusal of Sir John's note-book, had laid before them a dish on which reposed a small but well-boiled leg of one that had trod the South-downs but a week before in all the pride of lusty life. There was a silence for a moment.

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 'You will, as usual, take the fat?' queried Sir

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'Lean for me to-day', retorted Joanna, with one of her bright flashes.

'Nay, nay,' said her husband, 'that were against tradition, which assigns to you the fat'.

Joanna pouted. Her mind rebelled against dictation. Besides, were not her aphorisms superior to those of her husband? The cold face of Sir John grew eloquent in protest. She paused, and then with one wave of her stately arm swept mutton, platter, knife, fork, and caper sauce into the lap of Sir John, whence her astonished Binns, gasping in pain, with much labour rescued them. Joanna had disappeared in a flame of mocking laughter, and was heard above calling her maid for salts. But Sir John, ere **yet** the sauce had been fairly scraped from him, unclasped his note-book, and with trembling fingers wrote therein, 'Poole's masterpieces are ever at the mercy of an angry woman'.

But the world is hard, and there was little mercy shown for Joanna's freak. Her husband had slain her. That was all. She with her flashes, her gaiety, her laughter, was consigned to dust. But in Sir John's note-book it was written that, 'The hob-nailed boot is but a bungling weapon. The drawing-room poker is better.'" 1

There can be no gainsaying that Meredith has in places been too clever for his own good, that his characters at times are too brilliant to be real and that his aphorisms are occasionally too numerous to be appreciated. Viewed as a whole, however, his aphorisms are not overdone, but are a natural outlet to his ever-active intellect and an essential factor in his style. If one believes that style is the man, then Meredith's individuality will appear nowhere to better advantage than in the aphorisms he employs. They are a

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 advantage than in the aphorisms he employs. They are a

part of him just as his vocabulary, his innate culture, or his sense of humour are a part of him. Probably no one has ever read all of his novels without at some time feeling that his epigrams were the small-pox of his style, just as he defined puns as

"the small-pox of the language"

and without feeling also a curious need for vaccination.

Similarly, no one could have read his works without experiencing very frequently a keen sense of satisfaction at the aptness and cleverness of his gems of thought. To think of Meredith is to think of aphorisms; not to think of Meredith is to lose much of the best that literature can offer.

In conclusion, let us quote what Mr. J. H. Crees has said of Meredith's aphorisms:

"And how delightful is the spectacle of 'brain' once we begin to plumb our author's depths! How wise and noble, how serene and patient is he, how great a master of thought! The epigram is at all times easier to condemn than to eschew, and when the epigram is a sudden flash of light in the darkness, the distilled wisdom of one of the wisest of all minds, the free unforced result of highest mental activity, in what other mood shall it be greeted than in the thankfulness of grateful acceptance?"

1

SUMMARY

Aphorisms in the literature of the English language, and particularly in the literature of the nineteenth century, were comparatively few. George Meredith has stood apart as an author who contributed as many, if not more, aphorisms than any other nineteenth century writer.

Aphorisms in general are pithy statements expressing a profound thought in original fashion. They differ in their precise meaning from an axion, an epigram, a maxim, or an apothegm, but for our purpose these words are used interchangeably. The equipment of an aphorist, his background and experience, are important. Meredith's life and his type of mind are peculiarly fitting to the composition of aphorisms.

The subjects with which Meredith's aphorisms deal are varied and cover a wide scope. From a single epigram it is often possible to glean Meredith's opinion on a given subject.

His aphorisms on women, for example, are copious. From them we gather that he is abhorrent of sentimentalism in woman or in man. He dispises

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His aphorisms on women, for example, are copious. From them we gather that he is aghast of sentimentalism in women or in men. He dislikes

egoism in woman, and likewise describes the effect of man's egoism upon her. He believes firmly in the equality of the sexes - an equality intellectual as well as social. Meredith aphorizes freely on wit and intellect in women. In general, he has shown by his aphorisms that he is a strong defender of woman.

Of the relations between men and women in friendship and love, Meredith has propounded many aphorisms. An ideal friendship he believes quite possible between the sexes. He has illustrated his point by portraying ideal friendships and aphorizing upon them. Love, Meredith believes an important factor in the lives of all, particularly because it rids us of our egoism to a certain extent. Love is founded in the earth but is divine in its essence. Imagination, frankness, and understanding are necessary to him who has real love. Aphorisms on this subject take into consideration the degree and the variety of love.

Meredith has given a precious sheaf of wisdom on the subject of youth. He sees the two sides to youth's nature - its inexperience and its nobility. His epigrams, however, laugh with youth rather than at it. Many aphorisms are devoted to youth in love.

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His aphorisms on Nature are less frequent but equally definite. Women, he observes, are peculiarly close to Nature, and all of us, if we would obtain our End in life, should be close to Mother Earth.

Meredith's aphorisms on spiritual ideals and prayer are frequent. He believes in the development of the spiritual through the use of the senses. Spirituality is a necessary part of every well balanced life. Although he did not always grant the importance of a Creator, he believed firmly in the efficacy of prayer, as his many aphorisms indicate.

In addition to specific subjects, Meredith's novels contribute much wisdom of general importance. Patience, gossip, jealousy, enthusiasm, cynicism, small motives, are among a few of the many subjects upon which Meredith has contributed worthwhile aphorisms.

Meredith employed aphorisms in his novels in different ways. Either he appeared as the author to expound his wisdom, or he chose a character or a book within his novels to act as his mouthpiece. When Meredith himself acts as aphorist, his wit is generally refreshing. Only occasionally, when he allows himself to become lost in an epigrammatic digression, does he over act. The aphorism led him in some places to a

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use of metaphor which often served to obscure his meaning. Occasionally he combined both aphorism and metaphor. In general the use he made of both in his novels is a helpful aid to the interpretation of his thought and a characteristic of his style with which it would be difficult to dispense.

Very often as we have said, Meredith, to expound his wit, introduces a character who is unusually versed in epigrammatic powers. In four books Meredith has given special attention to aphorisms. In The Ordeal, Sir Austin depends upon "The Pilgrim's Scrip", a collection of aphorisms pertaining to the system under which his son is being reared. At times the role of aphorist is carried to extremes, but for the most part, Sir Austin is pictured as exactly the type of person who would carry his wisdom in a note book. Adrian Harley contributes caustic epigrams to the book; Lady Blandish aphorizes well; Bessie Berry is the composer of precepts based on commonsense and experience. The aphorisms in The Ordeal in general are well done and naturally introduced.

"The Egoist's Hand-book" is used in The Egoist to give forth aphorisms on various subjects. Its use is less frequent than that of "The Scrip", but it serves

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Very often as we have said, Meredith, to expand his wit, introduces a character who is unusually versed in epigrammatic powers. In four books Meredith has given special attention to aphorisms. In The Order, Sir Austin depends upon "The Philosopher's Scrap", a collection of aphorisms pertaining to the system under which his son is being reared. At times the role of aphorism is carried to extremes, but for the most part, Sir Austin is pictured as exactly the type of person who would carry his wisdom in a note book. Adrian Haxley contributes various epigrams to the book; Lady Richmond generalizes well; Jessie Berry is the composer of precepts based on common sense and experience. The aphorisms in The Order in general are well done and naturally introduced.

"The Philosopher's Scrap" is used in The Sign of the Cross to give forth aphorisms on various subjects. Its use is less frequent than that of "The Scrap", but it serves

as a summary of Meredith's ideas of an egoist. Mrs. Mountstuart Jenkinson, DeCraye, Whitford and Dr. Middleton also serve as carriers for Meredith's wisdom in The Egoist. The "Book of Egoism" is not overdone; but the epigrams at Patterne Hall become monotonous and prove that too much brilliance, as too much dullness, will produce monotony.

Diana, of Diana of the Crossways, is a brilliant carrier for Meredith's aphorisms and in general is not a monotonous mouthpiece for them. Lady Dunstane is also capable of aphorizing and converses epigrammatically with Diana.

The Amazing Marriage contains an aphoristic device - Captain Kirby's "Book of Maxims" and has witty characters such as Gower Woodseer, but the aphorisms in it are less numerous than in the other three novels considered.

Despite characters given to aphoristic expression, and Meredith's own aphorisms, his other novels are less important for their pithy wisdom.

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that his sustained brilliance detract from his style. Others, with Mr. Barrie, believe that his aphorisms both add to and detract from the merits of his style. Parodies from various sources indicate the extremes to which Meredith's aphorisms could go; and the consequent effect upon his style.

In general, his aphorisms are not exaggerated or overdone, but natural expressions of his intellect and individuality, and peculiarly fitting to his fine literary style.

Preaching's Career

The Spoils

The Dragon's Conquest

Blind of the Crossings

One of our Songsters

Lord Arden and his Gratitude

The Amazing Marriage

London: Greaves Publishing Company 1900

that his sustained brilliance detract from his style. Others, with Mr. Barrie, believe that his aphorisms both add to and detract from the merits of his style. Periodics from various sources indicate the extremes to which Barrie's aphorisms could go; and the consequent effect upon his style. In general, his aphorisms are not exaggerated or overdone, but lateral expressions of his intellect and individuality, and peculiarly fitting to his literary style.

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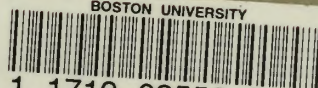
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